PR
3343
.M28
1972

DISCARDED

UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG
LIBRARY
515 Portage Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 2E9

PR
3343
.M28
1972

CHATTERTON:

AN ESSAY.

BY THE REV.

S. R. MAITLAND, D.D. F.R.S. & F.S.A.

FOLCROFT LIBRARY EDITIONS / 1972

Limited to 150 Copies

CHATTERTON:

AN ESSAY.

BY THE REV.

S. R. MAITLAND, D.D. F.R.S. & F.S.A

LONDON:
RIVINGTONS, WATERLOO PLACE.
1857.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2023 with funding from
Kahle/Austin Foundation

https://archive.org/details/chattertonessay0000srma

CHATTERTON.

§ 1. *Introduction.*

Ever since I became capable of reflecting on the subject, it has seemed to me strange, and unaccountable, that men should be so careless—or perhaps I ought to say, should so misapply and mispend the care and pains which they really do take occasionally, at intervals, by fits and starts, in one way or another—about the reality of things which are presented to their minds as truths. One would expect to find it an innate, and almost firstborn, desire—a wish where it did not amount to a prayer, a curiosity where it was not an anxiety—and so it is, in some sense and degree; and men do more or less act under the impulse. But how do they—and how should they—do it? Of course I am not going to enter on such a subject here; and I only mention it by way of explanation. The Reader may think it ambitious, but not unnatural, that such reflections should have led me to think of attempting something in the nature of an enquiry respecting "The

right Means and Methods of seeking and knowing Truth." He will then also see that of such a work, more than one chapter, (or else a very long one) must be devoted to the subject of "Literary Imposture,"—and, further, that such a chapter could not be written without some notice of Chatterton and Rowley's Poems.

This may sufficiently explain how it was that when I became aware of the recent revival of the subject, I had an Essay, or part of one, by me—not indeed as polished, or perhaps as correct, as it should be; but in some sort, cut and dry, or as our transatlantic friends say, "rough-and-ready." At the same time I must own that from my boyhood, and irrespective of the considerations to which I have referred, I have always felt a great curiosity respecting the Rowleian controversy. While yet at school, I became possessed of Gregory's Life of Chatterton, and from that time, without going much out of my way, I have never failed to read what I have met with. Sometimes I have felt tempted to write; and it will be seen that I have, at intervals, made notes of what has been written by others, and of what has occurred to my own mind; and that I have even gone the length of publishing in a very small way, as I will presently mention. In the mean time let me say that when, in turning over papers, these notes have come to hand I have looked at them and put them back, under an impression that though writers and declaimers might now and

CHATTERTON.

§ 1. *Introduction.*

Ever since I became capable of reflecting on the subject, it has seemed to me strange, and unaccountable, that men should be so careless—or perhaps I ought to say, should so misapply and mispend the care and pains which they really do take occasionally, at intervals, by fits and starts, in one way or another—about the reality of things which are presented to their minds as truths. One would expect to find it an innate, and almost firstborn, desire—a wish where it did not amount to a prayer, a curiosity where it was not an anxiety—and so it is, in some sense and degree; and men do more or less act under the impulse. But how do they—and how should they—do it? Of course I am not going to enter on such a subject here; and I only mention it by way of explanation. The Reader may think it ambitious, but not unnatural, that such reflections should have led me to think of attempting something in the nature of an enquiry respecting "The

right Means and Methods of seeking and knowing Truth." He will then also see that of such a work, more than one chapter, (or else a very long one) must be devoted to the subject of "Literary Imposture,"—and, further, that such a chapter could not be written without some notice of Chatterton and Rowley's Poems.

This may sufficiently explain how it was that when I became aware of the recent revival of the subject, I had an Essay, or part of one, by me—not indeed as polished, or perhaps as correct, as it should be; but in some sort, cut and dry, or as our transatlantic friends say, "rough-and-ready." At the same time I must own that from my boyhood, and irrespective of the considerations to which I have referred, I have always felt a great curiosity respecting the Rowleian controversy. While yet at school, I became possessed of Gregory's Life of Chatterton, and from that time, without going much out of my way, I have never failed to read what I have met with. Sometimes I have felt tempted to write; and it will be seen that I have, at intervals, made notes of what has been written by others, and of what has occurred to my own mind; and that I have even gone the length of publishing in a very small way, as I will presently mention. In the mean time let me say that when, in turning over papers, these notes have come to hand I have looked at them and put them back, under an impression that though writers and declaimers might now and

then refer to the subject, yet nobody in these days knew, or cared, much about it; or would do so until something should occur to throw further light upon it. I quite agree with a reviewer through whose critique I became aware of the existence of Professor Masson's work, that "Chatterton is one of those personages whom the general world knows more by allusion than by acquaintance. Every one can talk of 'the marvellous boy' but few read Rowley's Poems or know much more about their author than that he ran away from Bristol, and met with a premature death in London[1]."

My reasons for publishing now will, I hope, become further apparent in the following pages, and I only wish here to add by way of introduction, a brief notice of some small attempts which I have previously made, to call attention to the subject and to expose what I consider as a popular delusion.

Some years ago when my attention had been accidentally, I forget how, called to the subject, I felt a curiosity to test the state of public opinion respecting it. In the first instance my object was to learn whether there was anybody who took any interest in the matter. With this view I applied to the widely-circulated and useful periodical, "Notes and Queries;" and enquired whether any correspondent could reconcile, or account for, the remarkable discrepancy between the statements of Dr. Gregory

[1] Guardian Nov. 5, 1856.

in his life of Chatterton and Mr. Barrett in his history of Bristol, respecting the means of self-destruction employed by Chatterton; the former describing it as arsenic, and the latter as opium. My query was inserted in the number for Jan. 1st, 1853[2]. To my great surprise, and satisfaction, this query brought forth in the number for February the 5th, a report of the coroner's inquest, from Mr. Gutch; who prefaced it by saying, "I am not acquainted with any printed work which contains a report of the inquest. It is not in the large collection of Chatterton's *Works* and *Lives*, and the innumerable newspaper and magazine cuttings which fill several volumes, and which belonged to Mr. Haselwood; nor is it in Barrett's *Bristol*, or in Herbert Croft's *Love and Madness*[3]."

With a view to keep up the question, I sent a short note plainly expressing my conviction that Chatterton was not the author of Rowley's Poems, and asking for further information, which was inserted in the number for February 19th[4]. It produced a very courteous reply in the number for March 12[5], and led to my being favoured with a sight of the MS. mentioned in it; but I believe that nothing further appeared on the subject until the number for July 16th[6], when a writer under the signature of Bristoliensis furnished a little lively note beginning, "We are all very curious in Bristol

[2] Vol. vii. p. 14. [3] Ib. p. 138. [4] Ib. p. 189.
[5] Ib. p. 267. [6] Vol. viii. p. 62.

to know what evidence or light J. M. G. of Worcester can bring to bear upon the Rowley poems" &c.—and adding, "I had thought that in 1853 no one doubted their authorship." It seemed that, with all Bristol on one side, and Mr. Gutch on the other, the question was in good hands; and I did not interfere; but I believe that the controversy dropped, so far as that work was concerned.

After nearly two years, that is on the 26th October 1854, "the Inauguration of the Bristol Athenæum" took place, and furnished a subject for a leading article in the Morning Chronicle for the 28th, in which speaking of Bristol, the writer observed that "the city produced, but did not nurture, the miserable genius of Chatterton," and made some other remarks which called forth a letter on "Bristol and its Worthies" by a correspondent who wrote under the signature of A. H. E. in the paper for Nov. 1. In excuse for the neglect of Bristol this writer said "it should be remembered that Chatterton, in strict matter of fact, was simply an enthusiastic impostor." What this meant, I did not, and do not know. I replied however in the paper for the 7th, but as I purpose to give the letter hereafter, I say no more in this place of it, or of the correspondence which followed.

But to say the truth these and some other trifling incidents which occurred from time to time kept up my attention, and led me to think that a good many persons took an interest in the question. To be

sure it shewed itself in odd ways; but I was glad to see it in any form in the hope that it would lead to investigation and discovery. It is not worth while to specify all the ways in which I was haunted; but, somehow or other, the subject continually turned up. I heard for instance much talk of a picture in the Exhibition, which was greatly, and I believe justly, admired as a work of art; and, I think, popularized by being engraved for one of the Illustrated papers —when a New York newspaper fell in my way, I took it up and found an ecstatic spiritualist crying

> "Let the lost Pleiad Chatterton attune
> His harp in that bright brotherhood of song."

Then Mr. Kerslake the bookseller of Bristol sent me one of his catalogues, which are as inevitable reading as anything that ever stood on his shelves, and what met my eye? "190. *Autograph*—The lower half of a leaf of the School Copy Book (a round-hand Copy,) with signature 'THOMAS CHATTERTON, 1766,' at the back some verses in small-hand, dated 'October the 24th 1766,' the writing is very accurate and beautiful. *Inserted for preservation in* ROWLEY'S POEMS, 1778, 8°. 3*l.* 13*s.*" A considerable price certainly; especially as the purchaser of No. 190 could hardly help taking No. 191. not into the bargain, but as a fresh bargain for three more guineas; it being an Autograph and "The original draft of CHATTERTON'S

First Eclogue, before he had dressed it in Rowley's Attire, 4°. 4 pages 3*l.* 3*s.*" Being fully convinced that Mr. Kerslake understood his own business and the state of the market better than I did, I could not but suppose that Chattertoniana were looking up—then (just about the same time I think) there came out a discussion in the Notes and Queries, whether a certain picture was a portrait of Chatterton, and whether the unhappy youth had not sat for his likeness to Gainsborough—in short, for I would not be tedious, something or other seemed to be continually inviting attention, until I got into a sort of Semper ego fret, sought out my old papers, fetched down a basketful of chattertonian books which had long been atticised, and half-resolved to look into the matter again, and see if I could not make up something like a protest against what I have so long believed to be a popular delusion. For some days, however, perhaps I should say weeks, the papers, only partially read and tied up again, were replaced in a drawer, and the basket remained unmolested beneath the table, when, by the Guardian of Nov. 5th I first heard of Professor Masson's work. But for this it is probable that what I have noted on the subject at various times might now, as on former occasions, have been quietly put by; but when I saw the matter taken up elaborately, and in such a tone, by a gentleman in Professor Masson's position, I felt encouraged to publish; and it seemed to me that the best way of

doing it would be to print at once as much of the Essay which I had by me as was in any degree fit for the press. Without therefore altering a single word, and distinguishing the few which are added by placing them between brackets, I sent it to the printer—and here it is.

§ 2. *Chatterton's early years.*

The history of Chatterton, if we are content to take things as they are stated, without anxiety to make mystery, and excite wonder, seems—at least in every thing but the catastrophe—to be very plain and simple. The following facts are not I believe disputed. If they are, it is not very material to the argument.

Chatterton was born on the 20th of November 1752, between three and four months after his father's death[7]. He, and a sister rather more than three years older than himself[8], were brought up by his mother. He was sent to a school in Pile-street which had been kept by his father, and was then kept by a Mr. Love[9], from whence he was returned

[7] According to Chatterton's account his father died August 7th. [Works by Southey] iii. 452.

[8] [Professor Masson may be right in saying "two years," p. 236, but he gives no authority. I was following the statement of Mr. Bryant who examined this sister (Mrs. Newton) personally. *Obs.* p. 521.]

[9] Bry. 519. Mrs. Newton, in her letter to Sir H. Croft, seems to pass over this matter entirely.—"I recollect nothing

to his mother, when he was about five years old, as a dull boy incapable of receiving instruction. His mother, it is said, taught him to read from a manuscript music book and a black-letter testament. In his eighth year he was admitted into Colston's charity school. He remained there till the 1st July 1767; on which day he went, either as apprentice, or articled clerk, to Mr. Lambert an attorney in Bristol [1].

The first point on which there is any difference of opinion is, perhaps, as to the time at which Chatterton began to exercise his poetical talents. Sir Herbert Croft imagines that one, at least, of his productions was written when he was only "eleven years and almost five months old [2]." Others place it between that time, and his leaving the school. Mr. Thistlethwaite, who was not much older than himself, and who knew him intimately during this period, confidently affirms that he did not write any verses until after he had left school, and gone to Mr. Lambert's office.

Be this as it may, it is not pretended that he shewed any love or taste for antiquity, or produced any verse but doggrel satire on individuals, or imitations of the sacred poetry which he had probably learned in the school, before the occurrence of a particular circumstance well remembered by

remarkable till he went into *the* school, which was in his eighth year." Love and Madness p. 143.

[1] Bry. 520. [2] Love and Madness p. 146.

his mother and sister. They state that Chatterton's father, who was sexton[3] of Redcliffe parish, had brought away a quantity of parchments from the church—that some of these parchments had been used to cover a certain particular lot of bibles —that part of the remainder had been used for various purposes; and among the rest, that of making thread-papers. After Chatterton had left school, and gone to Mr. Lambert's, one of these thread-papers, accidentally seen at his mother's house attracted his attention. It led to enquiry[4]; and he found that there was a box containing the remainder of the parchments which, before he was born, his father had brought from the church. Both Mrs. Chatterton the mother, and Mrs. Newton the sister, when questioned only a few years after by Mr. Bryant, declared that they perfectly recollected the youth's finding the box. Mrs. Newton said (I doubt not with perfect truth and simplicity, and not meaning that one of her words should bear the unpleasant construction which I feel obliged to put upon it) that she could "recollect the whole process of his discovering the parchments in the box; and of his joy, and extasy when he found out that they were of *value*."

I do not mean to deny that the youth might in

[3] [This is wrong. He was the brother of the Sexton of St. Mary's Redcliffe, and was himself "a singer or subchaunter in the Cathedral choir of Bristol" Masson p. 182.]

[4] Bry. 520, 521.

the first instance be pleased to find that the manuscripts were readable, and seemed to offer matter of interest and amusement, to one who was perhaps fond of reading in general, and of reading poetry in particular; and that this might have led him to fill his pockets immediately, and to return from time to time for fresh supplies. But though we might, just at this outset, shut our eyes, and dream of poetic enthusiasm, they would, as we proceed, be gradually, and irresistibly, opened to the fact that, whatever other "value" the clever poetical lad might find in them, the sharp attorney's clerk very soon began to see their "value" as things which might bring him money or advancement. I believe that the reader who can lay aside the cant and mystery in which this story has been involved, and look simply at the facts of the case, will find that this is not only true, but is a key to a good deal which is otherwise strange and unintelligible. It seems to throw light on the language used by Mrs. Newton in her letter to Sir H. Croft. "About this time the parchments belonging to my father that was left of covering his boys books, my brother carried to the office. He would often speak in great raptures [of what? of the beauty of the poems? no such thing] of the undoubted success of his *plan for future life*." This quite agrees with her telling Mr. Bryant, that her brother used to bring home, from time to time, what he had copied while at the office, and read it to her; and

was very angry with her for not seeing how fine it was, as he was also with several of his friends to whom he read his copies, and who were equally unmoved; upon which, "he often repeated those memorable words, that, if Rowley had been a Londoner instead of a Bristowan" (what then? one expects him to say that Rowley's merits would have been appreciated and acknowledged; but no such thing) "his," (Chatterton's) "fortune would have been made[5]."

This phrase, which he seems to have repeatedly used, is in fact a key to a great deal. No doubt the youth did expect to make his fortune by this treasure-trove. To myself I do not seem to be saying any thing bad of him. Suppose that, instead of this, the boy had casually discovered that the supposed beads, with which he and his sister had been used to strew the floor in their infant play, were in reality pearls and diamonds; should we have deemed it quite shocking if he wasted a thought on any thing but their beauty, and the splendid appearance that he and his sister, and mother, and grandmother, might make in necklaces, ear-rings, and buckles? Would it be a proof of peculiar depravity if it crossed his mind that these things would sell for a thousand pounds —if he thought he should like to have such a sum —and if he was indignant with neighbouring

[5] Croft 145.

traders who would not give what he thought a fair price for his goods? Be this as it may, however, I repeat my belief that Chatterton had a notion of making his fortune by the help of these MSS.; and now let us see how he set about it.

§ 3. *Patrons and proceedings while at Bristol.*

How long Chatterton had been in Mr. Lambert's Office before he discovered the MSS. is not clear; "Mrs. Newton his sister," we are told, "being asked if she remembers his having mentioned Rowley's Poems, after the discovery of the parchments; says that he was perpetually talking on that subject, and once in particular, (about two years before he left Bristol) when a relation, one Mr. Stephens of Salisbury, made them a visit, he talked of nothing else[6]." At the time of this visit he had been with Mr. Lambert only about ten months; how long before that time he found the MSS. does not appear. Except this I find no notice of his making any use, or any mention, of them until the 1st of October 1768, when he had been at Mr. Lambert's fifteen months. At that time he took to Farley's Bristol Journal an account of the Fryars passing over the old Bridge. It does not appear why he selected this subject, or that the

[6] Works, vol. i. p. xxviii.

object was any other than to bring the MSS. into notice. A new Bridge had been recently finished; and was soon to be opened[7] in Bristol; and this perhaps originated the idea. That the document was genuine, I suppose nobody will maintain. However, it led, as he of course wished, to his being enquired after and detected. And it further led, perhaps he had calculated that it was likely to lead, to his introduction to Mr. Barrett who was engaged in writing a history of Bristol. I shall have occasion to say more of him presently; in the mean time it must be noticed that by the same means Chatterton seems to have made another acquaintance which was of great importance to him.

This was Mr. George Catcott, a pewterer in Bristol, and brother of a clergyman whose Hutchinsonian work on the Deluge is even now not entirely unknown. Mr. George Catcott seems to have had some taste for literature and antiquities. Gregory describes him as "a gentleman of an inquisitive turn, and fond of reading[8]." Our business is to observe one thing which is attested by Mr. Tyrwhitt. He says "soon after this Mr. Catcott commenced his acquaintance with young Chatterton, and partly as presents partly as *purchases*, procured from him copies of many of his MSS. in prose and

[7] [I believe I should have said that the Bridge had been recently finished and opened.]

[8] Life, p. 38.

verse. Other copies were disposed of, *in the same way*, to Mr. William Barrett, an eminent surgeon at Bristol who had long been engaged in writing the history of that city[9]."

Dr. Gregory in his life of Chatterton says that Mr. Catcott having met with him, soon after obtained from him very readily, *without any reward* "certain portions of Rowley's Poems which he specifies. The pieces in Mr. Catcott's possession . . . were immediately communicated to Mr. Barrett, whose friendship and patronage by these means our young literary adventurer was fortunate enough to secure." Chatterton, after this grew reserved; intimated that he had destroyed some of the originals, and so forth. "Mr. Barrett, however obtained from him at different times several fragments. . . . The friendship of Mr. Barrett and Mr. Catcott was of considerable advantage to Chatterton. They supplied him occasionally with *money* as a compensation for some of the fragments of Rowley, with which he gratified them[1]." On this statement of Dr. Gregory, as it stands reprinted in Southey's edition of Chatterton's works, (p. xxxi.) there is the following note signed K. "Some of his later compositions however, demonstrate, that he was not thoroughly satisfied with his Bristol Patrons; and Mr. Thistlethwaite does not hesitate to assert, that he felt himself greatly dis-

[9] Preface to Rowley's Poems p. ix.

[1] Gregory's Life p. xxix.

appointed in his expectations of *pecuniary rewards* for his communications." I do not know whose note this is; but certainly Mr. Thistlethwaite had no reason to hesitate about asserting what is, as we shall presently see, so plainly attested by brutal scurrility.

But to keep to our point, which is not whether Chatterton got as much as he desired; but, what was the kind of *value* which the MSS. possessed in his eyes. Mr. Catcott we have seen was a buyer. Indeed he says himself, that Chatterton from time to time produced transcripts from alleged originals, "as his necessities obliged him," and he adds, "it was with great difficulty and *some expence*, I procured what I have[2]." A third purchaser (I might say victim) was Mr. Burgum, of whom personally I do not learn much except that he was the partner of Mr. G. Catcott in the business of a pewterer[3]. This is stated by "I. C.," I suppose Mr. Cottle, whom Southey speaks of as

[2] Monthly Review May 1777, quoted Gent.'s Mag. July p. 307.

[3] Croft says that he taught himself Latin and Greek. (L. and M. p. 161.) He seems also to have had a taste for Music; at least I happen to have a set of Quartetts by Kotzwara [the atrocious composer of the Battle of Prague] published at Bath, and also a set of Concertos by Norris of Oxford, in which I see his name (or what I suppose to be his) among the subscribers. [I do not know whether he was the "Henry Burgum of the Hotwells Gloucestershire, pewterer," whose name appears in the List of Bankrupts in the Gentleman's Magazine for March 1783.]

a sort of Co-editor of Chatterton's works, and he proceeds to say, "Chatterton was under some slight *pecuniary obligations* to Mr. Burgum, and calling on him one day, when he was about sixteen years of age," (he wanted less than two months of sixteen when he sent his account of the passing of the Bridge to the newspaper) "he told him that he had his pedigree at home, from the time of William the Conqueror, and *informed* him" (the writer puts the word in italics I presume to intimate that Mr. Burgum had no such notion previously) "of the many distinguished families to which he was allied. Mr. Burgum expressed a wish to see this Pedigree, and a few days after Chatterton presented him with the following [4]"—that "following" is a great coat of arms, and a string of rubbish, indescribably ignorant and impudent; and occupying nine and twenty pages of the printed book in which it is preserved to the shame of the writer. Was this any thing like swindling, or was it only hoaxing the kind, vain, man to whom he was under "pecuniary obligations?" More of his conduct towards Mr. Burgum hereafter. In the mean time our bird of prey flew at higher game.

[I ought in the first place to have mentioned the attempt on Mr. Dodsley the publisher; but I was not, I suppose, aware of its existence. I am now indebted to Professor Masson for what I know of it.

[4] Chatterton's Works vol. ii. p. 455.

He does not refer to any authority, but gives two letters dated respectively Dec. 21, 1768 and Feb. 15, 1769. The real value of these letters lies in the evidence which they afford, that at least by the time of the date of the later one, several of Rowley's poems (whether originals or copies) were considered to be in a marketable state. The object of the first of these is to let Mr. Dodsley know that the writer could furnish him with "several ancient poems;" and of the second to offer (not to sell or produce) the MS. of *Ælla*, but to furnish a copy of it. In this case, as in that which we have to look at next, he seems to be guarding himself from detection, by disavowing ownership. He begins by saying:—

"Having intelligence that the tragedy of *Ælla* was in being, after a long and laborious search I was so happy as to attain a sight of it. I endeavoured to obtain a copy of it to send you; but the present possessor absolutely denies to give me one, unless I give him one guinea for a consideration. As I am unable to procure such a sum, I made a search for another copy, but unsuccessfully . . . . I am far from having any mercenary views for myself in the affair, &c."

"This clumsy attempt to extract a guinea from the publisher" says Professor Masson p. 212 "very naturally failed;" but as the Professor also observes "Chatterton was not daunted." I may, after this addition still say, that he "flew at higher game."]

As to Mr. Walpole—How far Chatterton was right or wrong in his opinion, this is not the place to enquire; but it seems that, from seeing some of

Horace Walpole's works, and perhaps on other grounds, he conceived him to be a very great man, and in particular a very great antiquary. Mr. Gardner's testimony is very curious as to this point. He heard Chatterton say that by certain means a man might imitate "the ancient poets so [exactly] that the most skilful observer should not be able to detect him: No, said he, not Mr. Walpole himself[5]." At the same time he knew that "Mr. Walpole himself" had very recently been duped in the matter of Ossian. With these notions, and this knowledge, he thought he might try his luck for some better position in society than that which he filled. Accordingly, about six months after the account of the Bristol Bridge, he commenced his operations on Mr. Walpole by a letter dated 25 March 1769, accompanied by a discourse on "the Ryse of Peyncteyne in Englande, wroten bie T. Rowleie, 1469." In a note on this title he says that Rowleie's "merit as a biographer, historiographer, is great, as a poet still greater: some of his pieces would do credit to Pope; and the person under whose patronage they may appear to the world, will lay the Englishman, the Antiquary, and the poet under an eternal obligation[6]."

The audacity and suddenness of the blow, and the entire absence of all ground for judging of the conditions of his correspondent, seconded perhaps

[5] Works iii. 521. [6] Works iii. p. 378.

by some little distrust of his own antiquarian knowledge, seems to have completely puzzled Mr. Walpole, who returned a civil answer, and learned (what is the only point in the business that concerns our enquiry) that the writer "was Clerk to an Attorney, but had a taste for more elegant studies; and hinted a wish that Horace Walpole would assist him with his interest in emerging out of so dull a profession by procuring him some place in which he could pursue his natural bent." This needs no comment; but it is worthy of remark that throughout the business Chatterton represented the MSS. as being the property, and in the possession, of another person. This may have been mere gratuitous lying; but it looks like cunning, providing against the very probable detection of imposture. It is still more important in an enquiry about an "unprincipled impostor[7]" to observe that, according to Walpole's account, Chatterton informed him "that he was the son of a poor widow, who supported him with great difficulty." It is almost impossible that this should be any

[7] [This refers to the little controversy in the Morning Chronicle of which I have already spoken at p. 7. Having characterized Chatterton as 'an unprincipled impostor,' I was called upon by an opponent to explain "how, if Chatterton did not compose 'Rowley's Poems but discovered them in their original shape, he can be deemed an impostor.' It might be a sufficient answer to say, that many persons have been "unprincipled impostors" who were never suspected of having any thing to do with Rowley's Poems.]

thing but a deliberate lie. Did he not know that he had been off his mother's hands ever since he was eight years old, and was at the very time of writing maintained by Mr. Lambert[8]? When afterwards questioned about "distresses" he "acknowledged that he wanted for nothing, and denied any distress on that account[9]," and in fact he gave his employer Mr. Lambert a still more satisfactory testimonial, and receipt in full, by wholly and entirely (so far as I see) omitting all allusion to him, while his ungrateful muse lampooned and ridiculed all his other benefactors[1].

[8] He was bound for seven years from 1st July 1767. The apprentice fee paid by Colston's charity was ten pounds. The master was to find him in meat, drink, lodging, and clothes; the mother in washing and mending." Works, i. xviii.

[9] Barrett p. 646.

[1] I should not lay much stress upon this exception if the apparent respect had not continued after Chatterton left Bristol; for Mr. Lambert was, I believe, the only one of his friends who had ever cuffed him. Well might it have been for the unhappy youth if the others had done the same, as probably some of them would have done if they had known what he wrote of them. Mr. Lambert thought himself under the necessity of correcting him for sending "a very abusive anonymous letter" to his old schoolmaster, which was traced to Chatterton and identified by the hand-writing and the office paper.

As to Walpole's testimony respecting Chatterton's statement, it deserves the more credit and was rather candid; for one of the charges against which he was defending himself was that he had turned a deaf ear to the claims of genius in distress. This he denied; "Chatterton," he says, "was neither indigent nor distressed at the time of his correspondence

Next as to Ralph Bigland, Esqr., Somerset Herald—Whether what is to be said of him should be placed after, or before, what I have said of Horace Walpole, I do not know. The matter is mentioned after the Walpole business in Chatterton's Works, and the chronology is not material. Chatterton had goods for various kinds of customers in his pack. He could furnish Mr. Barrett with accounts of the religious foundations, Mr. Burgum with his own pedigree, Mr. Walpole with anecdotes of painting, and (apparently about the same time) he introduced himself to the Somerset Herald; who probably treated his epistle as a hoax, devised and executed by some very ignorant person. This letter is given in Chatterton's Works vol. iii. p. 408. It is there stated that it "is taken from the Gentleman's Magazine, and rests on the authority of the anonymous correspondent J. D."

It does not actually propose a partnership or expressly stipulate that the writer shall be paid for the assistance which he offers in "composing a book of Heraldry."

Again, as to Mr. Clayfield—"At about seventeen" says Chatterton's sister "he became ac-

with me. He was maintained by his mother, and lived with a lawyer." *Gent.'s Mag.* Apr. 1782 Vol. lii. p. 194. Walpole was under no temptation to forge such a statement, though he might accept it, and fairly acknowledge it, while protesting that he did not know that Chatterton "was necessitous, nor otherwise poorer than attorney's clerks are." Ibid. p. 247.

quainted with Mr. Clayfield, distiller, in Castle-street, who lent him many books on Astronomy[2]." The way in which Chatterton became acquainted with this gentleman, seems to me to be one of the most curious and characteristic parts of his history. I am not sure that I understand a poem which is printed in the first volume of his works, p. 191, entitled "On Thomas Phillips's death. From the original copied by Mr. Catcott." I infer from it, that on the death of Thomas Phillips who had been an usher, or assistant master, in Colston's charity school, Chatterton took occasion to write some verses, and by means of them to make himself known to Mr. Clayfield. Whether that gentleman was in any way connected, or acquainted, with Thomas Phillips, I do not see. The verses begin;—

> "To Clayfield long renown'd the Muses Friend,
> Presuming on his goodness this I send:
> Unknown to you, Tranquillity and Fame
> In this address perhaps I am to blame."

What the next sixteen lines mean I really do not know; but the poem concludes in a way which leads to a supposition that "send" in the second line above, was used for the rhyme, or only meant to refer to the passage from the door-step to the parlour;—

> "I wait the Admirer of your noble Parts
> You, friend to Genius, Sciences, and Arts."

---

[2] Works iii. 463.

I presume that this led to acquaintance; but, as to the books, in reply to Dr. Glynn's enquiries, Mr. Clayfield stated that the only books which he remembered to have lent were Martin's Philosophical Grammar, and one volume of his Philosophy[3]. It seems however as if he derived (or at least sought) some advantage of another kind. Mr. Barrett says, "Mr. Lambert, the attorney, found a letter upon the writing desk of Chatterton, addressed to a worthy *generous* man, Mr. Clayfield, stating 'his distresses,' and that on Mr. Clayfield's receiving that letter, he (Chatterton) should be no more[4]." Of this letter presently.

§ 4. *Remarks on what has been, and what remains to be, said.*

This seems to be the proper place for a few remarks, which may serve for a commentary on what has been said already, and as an introduction to what remains to be said.

Mr. Barrett, to whom we are indebted for the account of the fact, proceeds to say "At this letter Mr. Lambert being alarmed sent it to Mr. Barrett;" and he immediately sent for Chatterton. He talked to him kindly and seriously respecting the sin which he professed to meditate, and "the

[3] Bry. 533. [4] Works iii. p. 417.

bad company and principles he had adopted;" and he adds "this betrayed him into some compunction, and by his tears he seemed to feel it—at the same time he acknowledged he *wanted for nothing*, and denied *any distress* on that account [5]."

The next day he sent Mr. Barrett a letter, in which he said "In regard to my motives for the supposed rashness, I shall observe, that I keep no worse company than *myself*. I never drink to excess, and have without vanity too much sense to be attached to the mercenary retailers of iniquity.—No! it is my PRIDE, my damn'd, native, unconquerable *pride* that plunges me into distraction. You must know that 19-20th of my composition is pride: I must either live a slave, a servant, have no will of my own, no sentiments of my own which I may freely declare as such, or DIE! Perplexing alternative! But it distracts me to think of it. I will endeavour to learn humility, but it cannot be here. What it will cost me on the trial heaven knows."

It seems clear from these few lines that Chatterton had no just idea of the nature of pride; and it is equally obvious from the facts which I have adduced, that pride was not the vice which lay at the foundation of his troubles. That he was self-conceited, ambitious, arrogant, and self-willed beyond control, is too apparent; but it is not to be

[5] Works iii. 418.

believed that he ever had the pride, or any thing else (call it what you will) which should have prevented his accepting a dinner, or a shilling, if he had been really in want of one. I ground this opinion not only on the facts to which I have already adverted, but on others which I am about to state, and which I thus preface to save trouble. The reader will, without tedious explanations on my part, see the bearing of different circumstances which may be mentioned; some of which, though trivial in themselves, are in this point of view important. To proceed then with the facts which followed the accidental finding of the letter by Mr. Lambert.

"Some few weeks after this he" (Chatterton) "planned the scheme of going to London and writing for the booksellers"—so says Mr. Barrett[6]; and so, I doubt not, he fully believed; though a more suspicious person might have thought that there was something like a shadow forecast by those words of the letter to Mr. Clayfield, "it cannot be *here*." Mrs. Newton was probably more in her brother's secrets than Mr. Barrett or any body else, and she says, "A few *months* before he left Bristol he wrote letters to several booksellers in London, I believe to learn if there was any probability of his getting an employment there, but that I cannot affirm, as the subject was a secret at

[6] Hist. p. 647. Works iii. 419.

home[7]." If it was a secret at home, it might very naturally be unknown to Mr. Barrett, who probably meant only to say that "some few weeks after this" letter and the interview with Chatterton to which it led, he (Mr. Barrett) became acquainted with the "scheme of going to London." But, in point of fact, it seems probable that the scheme had been planned before Mr. Lambert found the letter on Chatterton's desk. This seems the more likely for the following reason.

Sometime after this—how long I do not know (but it must have been subsequently, for it was not a "few months" or even a "few weeks" but only a few days before Chatterton did actually go to London) another document was found, like the letter to Mr. Clayfield, on that desk where no carelessness had ever dropped a scrap of Rowley, or any "antique lore" either copy or original. It was dated April 14, 1770, it purported to be a Will, and announced the writer's purpose of self-destruction. "It was," says the editor of Chatterton's works, "the *accidental* sight of this will which occasioned Mr. Lambert to part with Chatterton; when the latter, a few days after, set off for London." Whether Mr. Lambert's sight of the document was purely "accidental," I cannot help doubting. "It appears" however says Dr. Gregory[8] "that long before he left Bristol he had repeatedly intimated

[7] Works iii. 464. [8] Works vol. i. p. l.

to the servants of Mr. Lambert, his intention of putting an end to his existence. Mr. Lambert's mother was particularly terrified, but she was unable to persuade her son of the reality of his threats, till he found *by accident* upon his desk a paper entitled the Last Will and Testament of Thomas Chatterton in which he seriously indicated his design of committing suicide on the following day, namely, Easter Sunday, April 15th 1770." Whether Mr. Lambert's finding this paper (any more than the letter to Mr. Clayfield) was purely accidental, may, as I have already said, be doubted, and also we may question whether Mr. Lambert, who was, as far as appears, a respectable and sensible man, really believed that his clerk was going to commit suicide, because he wrote a burlesque will, full of scurrility and insolence, especially after he had previously had occasion to chastise the youth for a somewhat similar offence. But it is not surprising that he should be quite willing to part with an inmate whom he was bound to maintain, but for whom he seems to have had very little employment; and who (whether seriously or in jest) astonished his servants, and terrified his mother, with proclamations that he was going to kill himself.

At all events Mr. Lambert did get rid of him; but before we proceed to the account of his subsequent adventures, a few words must be added with respect to this Will. Dr. Gregory suggests that "the paper was probably rather the result of tem-

porary uneasiness, than of that fixed aversion to his situation which he constantly manifested;" and on the word "uneasiness" he puts this note "I have been informed from good authority, that it was occasioned by the refusal of a gentleman, whom he had occasionally complimented in his poems, to accommodate him with a sum of money." Smoothed as it is, this fact does not tend to raise one's respect for Chatterton; but without some explanation the reader would scarcely be able to imagine or appreciate its true character. The gentleman appears to have been no other than Mr. Burgum, whom, as we have already seen, Chatterton "complimented" with a great coat of arms, and a pedigree that fills nine and twenty printed pages. Whether the beguiled pewterer had detected the imposture, or only thought that he had paid enough for his glorification, or for some other reason, Mr. Burgum, it appears "refused to accommodate him with a sum of money," and so in the Will (which is partly in, or perhaps it would be more correct to say, prefaced by) verse, the unaccommodating gentleman is addressed in the following lines

> "Burgum I thank thee, thou hast let me see,
> That Bristol has impress'd her stamp on thee,
> Thy generous spirit emulates the May'rs,
> Thy generous spirit with thy Bristol's pairs.
> Gods! what would Burgum give to get a name
> And snatch his blundering dialect from shame!

What would he give, to hand his memory down
To time's remotest boundary?—A Crown.
Would you ask more, his swelling face looks blue;
Futurity he rates at two pound two.
Well Burgum, take thy laurel to thy brow;
With a rich saddle decorate a sow,
Strut in Iambics, totter in an Ode,
Promise, and never pay, and be the mode[9]."

I do not pretend to make out the full meaning of all this; but one thing seems very clear—namely, that Mr. Burgum did not chuse to pay as much as Chatterton charged for pedigree and poetical compliment. And from what follows, after sixteen lines about Messrs. Catcott and Barrett, we may collect that he did not chuse to lend him money, which Chatterton seems to say, he had promised to do.

"Disinterested Burgum never meant
To take my knowledge for his gain per cent.
When wildly squand'ring ev'ry thing I got
On Books and Learning, and the Lord knows what.
Could Burgum then, my Critic, Patron, Friend!
Without security attempt to lend?
No, that would be imprudent in the man;
Accuse him of imprudence if you can.
He promised I confess, and seem'd sincere;
Few keep an honorary promise here."

This was not quite all that Mr. Burgum got by his patronage of this ungrateful youth. He was remembered in the Will itself, "To Mr. B—m all

[9] Works iii. 448.

my prosody and grammar, likewise one moiety of my modesty; the other moiety to any young lady who can prove without blushing that she wants that valuable commodity."

It was perhaps at this time, when he seems to have been more than commonly urgent to raise money, that he sent in the Bill which Sir Herbert Croft has printed ;

"Mr. G. Catcott to the executors of T. Rowley Dr.

To pleasure received in reading his historic works.	5	5	0
——————————————— his poetic works .	5	5	0
	10	10	0."

What success attended this application we are not told. Sir Herbert thinks that Mr. Catcott said it was the only occasion on which Chatterton ever "asked" for money[1]. That he received it is clear, even if there were no evidence but the lines addressed to Catcott in these verses ;—

"If ever obligated to thy purse
Rowley discharges all; my first chief curse[2]!"

To proceed, however, with the history. Mr. Lambert, as I have already suggested, had probably no disinclination to part with his apprentice; and indeed, though not named in the Will himself, it seems likely that he joined with some of the legatees in a subscription to pay the expence of his adventure. Those gentlemen, we may presume,

[1] L. and M. 208. [2] Works iii. 449.

had not seen—perhaps they never did see—the scurrility of which they were the subjects; and it is an observable, and anti-accidental, circumstance, that Mr. Lambert, throughout the verses and the Will, would find no reference whatever to himself, or to any member of his family. If Chatterton's friends did know how his muse had treated them, they must have been either very anxious to get rid of him, or very resolutely determined to heap coals of fire upon his head; for, Mr. Barrett tells us, "most of his friends and acquaintance contributed a guinea a piece towards his journey[3]."

It seems however most likely that his friends had not seen his satire; for, on grounds which will be obvious to any one who looks at the Will as it stands in Chatterton's works, but which are hardly worth detailing, we may believe that a very short time elapsed between Mr. Lambert's finding the paper containing it, and the setting out for London. The paper is dated "Saturday, April 20, 1770[4]," and if that is correct (except the clerical error of 20 for 21) Mr. Lambert could not have seen it till on or after Saturday, and it is clear from Chatterton's first letter to his mother after his arrival in London, that he had set out at the very latest on the following Wednesday[5].

The point for our consideration, however, is the

[3] Hist. p. 647. Works iii. 419. [4] iii. 448.

[5] iii. 420. [Professor Masson, I doubt not more correctly, says Tuesday the 24th of April. P. 235.]

subscription which enabled him to undertake the journey. "He had" says Dr. Gregory "a number of friends, and notwithstanding his disposition to satire he is scarcely known to have had any enemies[6]." I have already suggested the probability that his disposition to satire was not much known; but, whether or no, placing the statement beside Mr. Barrett's, and with no disposition to strain either of them, we are authorized to suppose that if generally speaking "most of his friends and acquaintance contributed a guinea a piece," the youth must have received (and as far as I see without any reluctance, or sense of humiliation) a much larger sum than was expended on the road to London. Of course he may have had debts in Bristol, and he may have paid them before he came away; or he may have given money to his mother or sister, of which I do not find that they ever said any thing; but, all things considered, I feel disposed to believe that Chatterton reached London with more money in his pocket than he had ever had at any one time in his life. Here, however, we are getting close to the main question and it may be best to state it in plain terms— Supposing Chatterton to have committed suicide, was he driven to it by want? To help us in forming an opinion on this point let us pursue our enquiry as to facts.

[6] Works i. lxxix.

§ 5. *Chatterton in London.*

He seems to have left Bristol in the basket of the stage coach on Wednesday the 25th [*read* Tuesday the 24th] of April 1770. Rain coming on he procured, at the expence of seven shillings, an inside place to Speenhamland. After a night which covered Marlborough Downs with a foot depth of snow, he mounted the coach-box, and reached London in safety.

He was not the person to "feel strange in a strange place;" and, in fact, he had sufficient introductions, which he lost no time in using. In his first letter to his mother, beginning, "Here I am, safe, and in high spirits," he concludes the narrative of his journey by saying, "Got into London about five o'clock in the evening—called upon Mr. Edmunds, Mr. Fell, Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Dodsley. Great encouragement from them; all approved of my design;—shall soon be settled." So much for his business with editors and booksellers. Then for relations, he says, "seen all aunts, cousins—all well—and I am welcome[7]."

This letter seems to have been written on the very night of his arrival in London; but even if we put it off to the day after, it must be admitted that he had lost no time, and done a good deal of

[7] Works iii. 421.

business. I suppose he had some remnant of the subscribed guineas in his pocket; and, whatever it might be, it probably was not much diminished by the expences of an inn. His relation Mrs. Ballance was lodging at the house of Mr. Walmsley a plaisterer in Shoreditch, and there Chatterton took up his quarters. His next letter to his mother, dated May 6th tells her, "I am settled, and in such a settlement as I would desire." . . . "I lodge in one of Mr. Walmsley's best rooms;" but that was not likely to be a very dear lodging, and all things considered we may imagine that his expences were not very heavy. As to his means of subsistence he says in the same letter "I get *four guineas* a month by one Magazine: shall engage to write a History of England and other pieces, which will more than *double* that sum. Occasional essays for the daily papers would more than support me. What a glorious prospect[8]."

In Dr. Gregory's life of Chatterton there is a note appended to an extract from one of these letters written from London to his mother and sister—"Much allowance must be made in reading these letters. They are evidently written in a boasting style, and it is to be feared sometimes with too little regard to the strictness of truth[1]." This is, no doubt, very true; and I quote it at the

[8] Works iii. 422.

[1] Works vol. i. p. lx. [This note is not in Gregory's Life. It is added in Southey's reprint.]

outset that I may not appear to neglect the caution. Indeed nobody who looks into the matter can doubt that there was too much truth in Mr. Barrett's remark, that Chatterton settled in London "cœlum non animum mutans[2]," and that he took his old trick of lying with him to Shoreditch. It is to be feared that, not having his "patron, critic, friend," Mr. Burgum, to hoax, the young rogue practised on his good kinswoman and fellow lodger Mrs. Ballance. In this letter, written only about ten days after his arrival in London, he says, "Mr. Wilkes knew me by my writings since I first corresponded with the booksellers here;" and he adds with great gravity, "I shall visit him next week and by his interest will ensure Mrs. Ballance the Trinity House." But that his friends might see that Mrs. Ballance's preferment was well cared for and certain, and did not depend on any such second-rate patronage as that of John Wilkes, he briefly says—"Intended waiting on the Duke of Bedford relative to the Trinity House; but his Grace is dangerously ill[3]."

This romancing and rhodomontade, however, should not prevent our believing as much of his statements about money-matters as will enable us to form some judgement of his position, because we have much external evidence in corroboration of them. The articles which he supplied to various

[2] Ibid. iii. 419. [3] iii. 432.

publications are in existence; and, in some degree, speak for themselves; and what I have quoted, as to that point, seems to me to bear no signs of extravagance or exaggeration; especially considered with reference to what he had done, rather than what he proposed to do.

There is another point to be remarked in this letter; namely that it contained a letter to Mr. T. Cary requesting him to copy and send letters, (of which also drafts were enclosed) to Mr. Henry Kator, Mr. William Smith, Mr. Mason and Mr. Mat. Meare. The purport of these letters was to get Mr. Cary and the others to *write* magazine articles which he undertook to get published—then at the end of his letter his injunction to his mother is, "tell (thirteen persons whom he names, with "&c. &c.") to read the Freeholders Magazine."

This was when he had been little more than a week in London. It was a business-like way of setting to work; let us see how he went on. In about another week (Monday May 14) he writes a third time to his mother dating, "Kings-Bench for the present;" and immediately relieving her by the assurance that he was not a prisoner, though Mr. Fell the bookseller of whom we have already heard, had been driven thither by his creditors. He adds "I have been bettered by this accident; his successors in the Freeholders Magazine, knowing nothing of the matter, will be glad to engage me on my own terms. Mr. Edmunds" (another of the

UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG
LIBRARY
515 Portage
Winnipeg, Manitoba

booksellers of whom we have heard) "has been tried before the House of Lords, sentenced to pay a fine and thrown into Newgate. His misfortunes will be to me of no little service."

He then proceeds "Last week, being in the pit of Drury Lane Theatre, I contracted an immediate acquaintance (which you know is no hard task to me) with a young gentleman in Cheapside; partner in a music shop, the greatest in the city. Hearing I could write, he desired me to write a few songs for him: this I did the same night, and conveyed them to him the next morning."

This may give us a glimpse of his habits. He certainly might beguile the journey from Drury Lane to Shoreditch by composing more or less of the songs, but we may imagine that he was not in bed long that night, and the transaction altogether does not give one the idea of a lad who would be likely to starve where there was bread to be earned. But he goes on to say "These" (songs) "he shewed to a Doctor in Music, and I am invited to treat with this doctor, on the footing of a composer for Ranelagh and the Gardens. *Bravo, hey boys, up we go!*"—but if in this *italic* burst of triumph we have the high-souled bard rejoicing that he is enlisted in the double service of poetry and music, we cannot but recognize the sharp boy of business immediately adding, "Besides the advantage of visiting these expensive and polite places gratis; my vanity will be fed with the sight of my name in

copper-plate, and my sister will receive a bundle of songs, the words by her brother." The Doctor of Music was, I presume, Dr. Arnold; who was, I believe, one of the proprietors of Marylebone Gardens. And though I do not see that Chatterton himself mentions the production, yet there is, among his works, a burletta called the Revenge, performed at those Gardens, for which it is said that the author received five guineas.

I hope it will be understood that I am not finding fault with, or attempting to discredit, what I have quoted; and that my drift, and only object, at present, is to shew that Chatterton, as far as we can judge, was minding his business, and going on prosperously. With the same view, let us look at his fourth letter which is addressed to his sister, under the date of May 30th; from "Tom's Coffee-house," a circumstance for which he accounts by saying,

"My present profession obliges me to frequent places of the best resort. To begin with, what every female conversation begins with, dress: I employ my money now in fitting myself fashionably, and getting into good company; this last article always *brings me in interest*. But I have engaged to live with a gentleman, the brother of a lord (a Scotch one indeed,) who is going to advance pretty deeply into the bookselling branches: I shall have lodging and boarding, genteel and elegant, gratis: this article, in the quarter of the town he lives, with worse accommodations, would be £50 per annum. I shall have, likewise no inconsiderable premium; and assure yourself every month shall end to your advantage: I will send you two silks this summer; and expect, in answer to this, what colours you prefer. My mother shall not be forgotten. My employment will be writing a voluminous History of London, to appear in

numbers the beginning of the next winter. As this will not, like writing political essays, oblige me to go to the coffee-house, I shall be able to serve you the more by it; but it will necessitate me to go to Oxford, Cambridge, Lincoln, Coventry, and every collegiate church near; not at all disagreeable journeys, and not to me *expensive*." . . . . "If money flowed as fast upon me as honours, I would give you a portion of £5000. You have, doubtless, heard of the Lord Mayors remonstrating and addressing the King: but it will be a piece of news to inform you that I have been with the Lord Mayor on the occasion. Having addressed an essay to his Lordship, it was very well received; perhaps better than it deserved; and I waited on his Lordship, to have his approbation, to address a second letter to him, on the subject of the remonstrance, and its reception. His Lordship received me as politely as a citizen could; and warmly invited me to call on him again. The rest is a secret.—But the devil of the matter is, there is no *money* to be got on this side of the question. Interest is of the other side. But he is a poor author, who cannot write on both sides. I believe I may be introduced (and, if I am not, I'll introduce myself) to a ruling power in the Court party[4]."

In the same letter he says "Essay-writing has this advantage you are sure of constant pay" &c.

After nearly three weeks (that is on June 19th) he begins a letter to his sister by telling her that he has "a horrid cold," and writes a jocular account of the way in which he had caught it. He seems to have suffered the letter to lie by until the 29th. When he adds as a postscript "my cold is over and gone. If the above did not recall to your mind some scenes of laughter, you have lost your ideas of risibility." The letter contains nothing like doubt, or disappointment, and no reference to his occupations, except that he says, "As I wrote very late

[4] Works iii. 433.

Sunday night (or rather very early Monday morning) I thought to have gone to bed pretty soon last night;" but that when half undressed he was attracted to the open window &c.

His 6th letter is dated July 8th, and is addressed to his mother. It is a kind letter respecting a box of presents which he was sending to her, his grandmother, sister, and Thorne, who must I presume have been a servant. A postscript obviously referring to something in a letter which he had received from Bristol, begins with, "I shall forestall your intended journey, and pop down upon you at Christmas." That letter was written on Sunday. On the Wednesday following he writes to his sister on the same subject of the presents, and after "some china and a fan," and some other things not to our purpose, he speaks of his literary occupation in a way which seems to shew that he was in no want of employment. "As to the songs, I have waited this week for them, and have not had time to copy one perfectly: when the season's over you will have 'em all in print. I had pieces last month in the following Magazines:

Gospel Magazine
Town and Country, viz.
Maria Friendless
False step
Hunter of oddities
To Miss Bush &c.
Court and City. London. Political Register, &c. &c."

The next letter appears to have been written to his sister; but I presume that what is published is only a part, as it begins abruptly without any address, "I am now about an Oratorio, which, when finished, will purchase you a gown." This seems as if he had given satisfaction to his musical employers, and was engaged to furnish words for one of the Oratorios which we know that Dr. Arnold soon after brought out. He goes on to say "You may be certain of seeing me before the 1st of January 1771 . . . . my mother may expect more patterns. —Almost all the next Town and Country Magazine is mine. I have an universal acquaintance:—my company is courted everywhere; and could I humble myself to go into a compter, could have had twenty places before now:—but I must be among the great; state matters suit me better than commercial. The ladies are not out of my acquaintance. I have a deal of business now, and must therefore bid you adieu. You will have a longer letter from me soon—and more to the purpose."

As far as I know, this is the latest communication which Chatterton's family received from him—at least the latest which they thought fit to make public, and (with the exception of one, which I reserve for future comment) the latest document from which we may learn any thing of his designs or proceedings. Before I speak of it I wish to offer one or two remarks on the letters already noticed.

§ 6. *Chatterton's real character and circumstances.*

As I have already suggested, it would seem as if he must have arrived in London with what, under all circumstances, we may call a considerable sum of money in his pocket; and these letters indicate occasions and means by which, we must suppose, he obtained a good deal more. What he got for his Songs is not mentioned; but I have stated that for one Burletta he seems to have received five guineas[5]. It appears from a memo-

[5] [I have already had occasion to speak of this Burletta; and to notice the remuneration which the author is said to have received for it. I do not like to do this without explicitly saying that I do not believe the Burletta to be the composition of Chatterton. I know that Southey has printed it among his works, and that Professor Masson calls it "his burletta" (p. 289, 293.) and mentions it as a proof of Chatterton's cleverness that "he goes an evening or two to Marylebone Gardens, and straightway he writes a capital Burletta" (p. 335.) but still I do not think it is Chatterton's.

I do not deny that for what it was meant to be, and by comparison with most of the miserable trash among which it stands, it may be called "capital." In fact its superiority as a composition alone would lead me to doubt. But, to say nothing of this, what is the title, and what does it indicate? It makes its appearance, according to Professor Masson "in the form of a neat little pamphlet, having this title-page, "The Revenge: a Burletta, acted at Marybone Gardens 1770; with additional songs; by Thomas Chatterton." Surely if the songs were "additional," they must have become so by being added to something else; and in this case the thing added to was the Burletta. It seems to me perfectly clear that the title was

randum on one of his papers that though Alderman Beckford died on the 21st of June, and before he could print the letter to him which would have earned two guineas, yet he got so much by Elegies, and Essays, as to be (according to his own terms in striking the balance) glad he was dead by £3 13*s.* 6*d.* It can hardly be doubted that he received money for many things of which we have no account, and with which he is not known to have had any concern. I shall have occasion to notice one such case with reference to the Annual Register. It contains a dissertation which, I dare say, Mr. Dodsley did not get for nothing. But of this presently. I think enough has been said to convince any reasonable reader that Chatterton *need not* have been, and *ought not* to have been, in want, up to the 20th of July; when, as we have just seen, he announced that his company was courted everywhere, and he had "a deal of business." I am quite aware that there may be grounds of distrust, that a disposition to boast, or a desire

meant to convey the idea that a Burletta previously in existence, and containing certain songs, had come, or was coming, out with "additional" songs. I believe therefore that Chatterton was accountable for only these "additional songs," whichever they might be; and I think it right to say so because I might be suspected of wishing to exaggerate the youth's earnings. It may be rather premature, but the plainest and shortest way to meet this is by saying that (as the reader may presently see) in my view of the case, the question whether Chatterton actually wrote the piece, would not be decided by our finding that he did, or did not, take the money for it.]

to prevent or remove the anxiety of his friends, might lead him to exaggerate success or conceal disappointment,—but what symptom of disappointment or distress is to be found?

It may be said that, "Get what he might, it would be easy for a young man in his circumstances to spend it, and twice as much." True; but the question is, did he do so? We do not need to be told that if he had had thousands, he might have lost them in half an hour at the gaming table. But I can see nothing which should lead me to believe that he was extravagant, or addicted to any expensive vice. That he was, in one sense of the word, profligate—that is, that he was an habitual and gross liar, and not restrained by any religious or moral principle from saying or writing that which he knew to be false for the sake of gain, is too clear; but that he was profligate as the word is used with reference to sensual immorality, at least in any such way as should account for pecuniary distress, I do not believe. Forming his notions of a fine gentleman from the wretched magazines and novels of his day, he thought it was knowing to set up for a rake, and he did so as far as he could[6]. He talked blasphemy, and wrote

[6] [With regard to Chatterton's connexion with these publications, Professor Masson says, "First, and by far the most hopeful as regarded receipts for his exchequer, was the *Town and Country*, to which he had been a pretty constant contributor, since its second number in February 1769. This maga-

obscenity, and was "reported," at least it seems as if he wished people to think that he was "reported,

zine, which had a very large sale" &c. (p. 284.) Seven years after the death of Chatterton Sheridan immortalized the infamy of this publication by the first scene in his School for Scandal; though it is probable that his words convey much less meaning to the present generation, than they did to those who first heard them from the stage. Certainly I did not know what Mr. Snake meant by "a *Tete a Tete*" in the Town and Country Magazine, until (while looking about for information as to Chatterton) I met with the volume for 1775—that is five years after Chatterton, and two years before Sheridan. The principal embellishment and attraction of each number—if I may judge from the volume to which I refer, and which is the only one that I have seen, was—a copper plate containing two oval portraits—*tete a tete*, looking at each other—of some notorious kept mistress, and her keeper, followed by a scandalous "History of the Tete-a-Tete annexed." This may be sufficient to enable the reader to form an estimate of the Magazine. Of course in a work published so long after Chatterton's time I did not expect to find much that could be of use for any other purpose; but I was surprised at meeting with the following notice among the "Acknowledgments to correspondents" on the back of the title page of the number for October, p. 506, "The short account of William Cannings, written by Roulie the Priest, must be deferred till we have room to spare." It is (by the way) rather singular that the next but one of the "acknowledgments" is in these terms,—"We are obliged to *Apollo* for pointing out some plagiarisms in our poetical department of the last Magazine.—We hope our correspondents will take the hint, and not palm old pieces upon us for originals." However, the "Account of William Cannings" appears in the number for November, p. 592; and occupies about three columns of small, close, printing. It is reprinted in Southey's edition of Chatterton's works, where it is prefaced by a statement that Rowley always manifested his gratitude to Canning, and that this "appears not only in many of his poems, but also

to have ruined three young ladies of fortune[7]." In one of his poems a friend is supposed to accost him;

> "Is there a street within this spacious place
> That boasts the happiness of one fair face,
> Whose conversation does not turn on you,
> Blaming your wild amours, your morals too.
> Oaths sacred and tremendous, oaths you swear,
> Oaths that might shock a Lutt'rell's soul to hear;
> Those very oaths, as of a thing of joke
> Made to betray intended to be broke,
> Whilst the too tender and believing maid,
> (Remember pretty * *) is betrayed[8]."

The testimony of Mrs. Newton his sister, and of Mr. Thistlethwaite one of his most intimate friends, leads to a belief that this was the mere folly of a vain boy, who does seem to have been able to make himself agreeable, and to have been, in fact, a great pet of the milliners and mantua makers. Mrs. Newton acknowledges that he would "frequently walk the College Green with the young girls that statedly paraded there to shew their finery;" but it is impossible to imagine that the young women with whom he thus associates were

in the following prose work, presented [to whom?] by Chatterton, and printed in the Town and Country Magazine for Nov. 1775, which, as a literary curiosity, our readers, we doubt not, will be glad to see re-published here, with several corrections." Vol. III. p. 75. The corrections are few and trifling; and I do not see any thing to explain how this document found its way into the Magazine so long after the death of Chatterton, but before the publication of Rowley's Poems.]

[7] Works iii. 180. [8] Works i. 181.

persons of bad character, or guilty of any thing worse than folly and flirtation. One of the strongest proofs of this is that in his third letter to his mother from which I have already quoted, he mentions Miss Rumsey, Miss Baker, Miss Porter, Miss Singer, Miss Suky Webb, Miss Thatcher, Miss Love, Miss Cotton, Miss Broughton, Miss Watkins, and Miss Webb, and in the course of the letter says "Let my sister send me a journal of all the transactions of the females within the circle of your acquaintance."

But indeed his course of life generally does not seem to have been such as to run him into want. "His taste for dissipation" says Dr. Gregory, who though he undertook to write his life, appears to have known very little of Chatterton's character, "seems to have kept pace with the increase of his vanity[9]. To frequent places of public amusement, he accounts as necessary to him as food. 'I employ my money' says he 'now in fitting myself fashionably'" &c., as I have just now quoted; but the dull biographer does not appear to have considered that the attendance of Chatterton, and his feeling on the subject, was the most natural thing in the world; that one might almost say it *was* food; that if he was to carry on the miserable trade in which he was embarked, it was a matter of business to see his own burlettas acted, and hear his own songs sung,

and frequent places of gossip and scandal where he might pick up materials for satire in the next month's magazine. It is said that he lodged nine weeks at Mr. Walmsley's, where his aunt also lodged; and that during that time he slept out but one night, and then, as they ascertained, he slept at a relation's. He assigned no reason to the people of the house for changing his lodgings for others in Brook Street Holborn. At the inquest held Friday[1], 27 *Aug.* 1770 Mrs. Angel sackmaker of 17 Brook Street Holborn deposed that he had come to lodge in her house "about nine or ten weeks ago"—which would be about the 18th or 25th of June; and the former is probably the nearer of the two, tho' that does not allow of his being quite nine weeks at Mr. Walmsley's; but (Sir Herbert Croft has suggested) it was not an unnatural move for one whose business lay at public places, especially Marylebone Gardens and Ranelagh, perhaps Sadlers Wells and the Theatres. Mr. Thistlethwaite, who writes like a sensible man in reply to the enquiries of Dean Milles, says "In the summer of 1763, being then in the 12th year of my age, I contracted an intimacy with one Thomas Phillips who was sometime usher or assistant" of Colston's school; and "towards the latter end of that year, by means of my intimacy with Phillips I formed a connexion with Chatterton, who

[1] So in N. and Q. vii. 138. but it is a mistake, for 27 Aug. was on Monday.

was on the foundation of the school, and about fourteen months younger than myself[2]." He afterwards says "The opportunities a long acquaintance with him afforded me, justify me in saying, that whilst he lived in Bristol he was not the debauched character represented" (by himself, Mr. Thistlethwaite should have added.) "Temperate in his living, moderate in his pleasures, and regular in his exercises, he was undeserving of the aspersion.—What change London might have effected in him, I know not; but from the strain of his letters to his mother and sister, and his conduct towards them after he quitted Bristol, and also from the testimony of those with whom he lodged, I have no doubt but the intemperancies and irregularities laid to his charge" (by himself, we must again put in) "either did not exist at all, or, at the worst are considerably aggravated beyond what candour can approve[3]."

"His temperance" says Dr. Gregory "was in some respects exemplary. He seldom eat animal food, and never tasted any strong or spirituous liquors; he lived chiefly on a morsel of bread or a tart, with a draught of water[4]." Sir Herbert Croft says "Chatterton, when a boy, hardly ever touched meat, and drank only water: when a child, he would often refuse to take any thing but bread and water, even if it did happen that his mother had a

[2] Works iii. 467.
[3] Ibid. iii. 480.
[4] Life p. 109.

hot meal 'because he had a work in hand and he must not make himself more stupid than God had made him[5].'" As to expensive sensuality then, I do not believe that on going to London he became "repente turpissimus;" and it appears to me almost incredible that with his character, and resources he should have been so speedily led to utter destitution.

It may be said, that he had been in London only about three months—that every thing was new to him—and he was new to every body—that, under this stimulus of novelty, he could do for a time what he could not keep up—that he would himself cease to be a novelty, and that the booksellers and editors who had valued him as a variety would get tired of him as he had exhausted his stock of new ideas, and fresh wits on adventure came forward, as much in want of the pay, and as able to earn it.

All this I fully grant. I think every person of common sense who saw what he was, and how he was going on, must have expected such a course to end in want and infamy. It seems impossible that he could have long continued to issue scurrilous libels on persons of all ranks and dispositions without getting himself, and the editors, publishers, and printers connected with him, into ruinous scrapes[6]. I will even add what may give addi-

[5] Ibid. 119.

[6] "Having said that Chatterton alternately flattered and satirised all ranks and parties, the following list of pieces

tional force to all this; and what, I will own, would probably if it had been known, have stopped his supplies, by leading the traders who employed him to turn him off at once—he was cheating *them*. Not what some would call innocently imposing on them quaint rhymes, in strange spelling, as the productions of Rowley or Canynge; but making them receivers of stolen goods, and utterers of forged notes. Selling (we need not scruple to say, but at all events furnishing) to one miscellany what he had plundered from another. Such practices could not have been long carried on without exposure. As to the "antique lore," as Chatterton calls it, it might puzzle the world for ever, and perhaps nobody might be particularly anxious to discover, whether certain illegible manuscripts were the work of Ischam or Tyb Gorges; but when Johnson's Rambler, Dodsley's Register, the Gentleman's Magazine, The Freeholder's Magazine, and perhaps as many more and as modern, were in question, the matter of plagiarism would not be difficult to settle, and the decision would be very likely to be known in the Row.

written by him but never printed will confirm that assertion. I have seen those pieces, copies of which are in the hands of a gentleman who favoured me with the list." *Hor. Walpole* in Gent.'s Mag. July 1782. p. 347. It will be observed that one article in this list, "To Lord Mansfield. A very abusive letter" has a "N.B. In this piece many paragraphs are cancelled, with this remark in the margin: '[Prosecution will lye upon this.]'"

§ 7. *Literary fraud.*

"How much he was distressed for knowledge" says Mr. Bryant "and how boldly he borrowed, or rather purloined cannot be better known than by the examples which follow[7]." He then gives several extracts from "Maria Friendless" (already mentioned as one of Chatterton's contributions to the Town and Country Magazine) printed in parallel columns with Johnson's "Misella[8]," and shews that a considerable portion of one, is a verbatim copy of the other. One can hardly imagine any thing more impudent. To steal from Johnson's Rambler before his face,—from an author and a work so popular,—was indeed bold; but it may be construed as a compliment. We may take it as a proof that Chatterton did not expect his readers to have seen the Rambler, or Johnson to meddle with the dirty publication for which he catered.

A still more singular instance is one which I met with very lately, and quite by accident. I had taken the volume of Dodsley's Annual Register for 1770 to seek an explanation of some political allusions relating to that time, and in turning over the leaves I found, among the Miscellaneous Essays, a "Dissertation on the virtues and abilities of

[7] Obs. p. 487.

[8] Rambler, No. 170.

Caligula's Horse." A paragraph which caught my eye, put me very much into the predicament of Dr. Primrose when he received a new edition of Mr. Jenkinson's cosmogony. However, I soon found that I was indebted to Chatterton's "Letter to Lord North," which is printed in Southey's edition of his works, with a note stating that it "is taken from the *Freeholder's Magazine* for August 1770," and adding sufficient reasons (beside the signature of his initials) for ascribing the authorship to Chatterton. The following extracts will shew that one, was taken from the other; and circumstances which will be mentioned presently seem to me to shew, almost a certainty, that what I call the "Freeholder's" was copied from "Dodsley's," and not "Dodsley's" from the "Freeholder's."

Dodsley's.

What a happiness (for example) must it have been to live under the auspicious reign of the Emperor Caligula, who had so great a regard to merit wherever he found it, and took such a fatherly care in providing for the happiness of his people that he made his horse a minister of state!

Freeholder's.

What a happiness must it have been, my lord, to have lived under the auspicious reign of that emperor, who was as munificent in rewarding merit, as he was sagacious in the discovery of it; indeed he took such a fatherly care in providing for the good of his subjects, that at last discovering a genius, where it was least expected, in his horse I mean, he advanced him to the first honours of the state.

Dodsley's.

I am sorry history should be silent in respect to some things very material to be known. I mean those relating to his birth, family and education—Methinks I am curious to know, whether this great minister was a coach or a cart-horse,—a hunter, or a pad,—to speak *in the Newmarket style* whether he had blood in him.

Freeholder's.

I am sorry, my lord, history has been defective in many things requisite to be known of this great minister; I mean his birth, progenitors, and education; not that the latter is of much consequence in one placed so near, and in some measure related to, the Crown. Many I know are desirous of being informed of his person and private life, whether he was fitted for a whisky or a dung-cart; a sprightly nobleman, or a country parson; in short whether he had good blood in his veins or not.

I have already said, that the editors of Chatterton's works state the grounds on which they assign to him the authorship of this paper in the *Freeholder's Magazine.* I may now mention a confirmatory circumstance of which they were obviously not aware. At p. 93 of the third volume of Chatterton's works (that is quite disconnected, and far distant, from the "Letter to Lord North" which begins on p. 237) and bearing no account of the source from whence it is derived there is an article headed, "Anecdote concerning Lord Jeffries;" and subscribed, "Taken from the Records of the Town of Arundel." Whether Chatterton really found this story, how Judge Jeffries went to Arundel to influence an election, and how the Mayor ordered

him out of his court; or whether he made it to magnify Alderman Beckford and his office, I do not pretend to say. It is more to our purpose to observe that the story stands in the *Annual Register* on the very next page to that on which the story of Caligula and his horse ends, word for word as it does in Chatterton's works, the only difference being in the title, which is simply "Extract from the Records of the Town of Arundel."

This, I say, confirms the opinion that Chatterton contributed the "Letter to Lord North;" but whoever was the author, the curious point, not yet touched on, is this—the Letter, as I have said appeared in the *Freeholder's Magazine* for August 1770, and it is obviously an abridgment of the Paper in a volume of the *Annual Register* which was not then published; and did not, indeed, come out until the next year. So that it seems an inevitable conclusion that Chatterton either furnished the article about Caligula, both to Dodsley and the Freeholder, or else he had such access to Dodsley's Annual Register, while in a state of gradual compilation during the year, that he was able to purloin from its unpublished matter, what he wanted for the Article in the Freeholder of the month of August.

The former of these suppositions—namely, that Chatterton sold the Caligula both to Dodsley and to the Freeholder—is the most simple; and (for a reason still to be mentioned) most likely to be the

true one. It may seem scarcely credible, but it is true, that the Essay had been in print rather more than ten years before Chatterton was born. As it stands in Dodsley's Annual Register, it is (with some verbal alterations, the insertion of one short paragraph, and the omission of another) a Number of a periodical paper entitled *Common Sense*, published Feby. 6th 1742 and reprinted in the Gentleman's Magazine for that month (p. 78.) under the Title "Caligula's Horse a good Minister." The verbal *alterations* are not worth notice; but the *insertion*, and the *omission* deserve attention. In Dodsley the first paragraph stands thus;—

"When I read over our own history, as well as that of other nations, I feel a kind of reverence rise in my soul for the memories of several emperors, Kings, princes, and sovereign dukes, for the wisdom as well as excellent taste, which they have shewn in the judicious choice of such persons as they thought worthy to be placed at the helm of government."

In the Gentleman's Magazine it stands,

"In reading history I always feel a kind of reverence rise in my soul for the memory of sovereigns who have shewn their wisdom, as well as excellent taste, in the judicious choice of ministers."

This is perhaps the strongest specimen of mere verbal *alteration;* the object being apparently only to extend the paragraph to nearly twice its length. The second paragraph is the *insertion;* and the grammar looks very much as if it was of Chatterton's making;—

"When one considers that the prince has it in his power to chuse out of millions of his subjects, and among whom there

are no doubt both wise men and fools, when we see him hit on one in whom virtue and wisdom are so equally conspicuous, that all the world agrees there was not his fellow left, it must fill one's mind with wonder and surprize."

The third paragraph (beginning "What a happiness") I have already quoted at length. It stands in the Gentleman's Magazine *verbatim* as I have given it from Dodsley; as, indeed, does the other paragraph which I have quoted, except that instead of the words "in the Newmarket style" we have "like a jockey." I do not pretend to have made a verbal collation of the two copies throughout; but as far as I see, on a cursory comparison, the omission of one paragraph, to which I have already alluded, is the only other difference worthy of notice.

This *omission* deserves attention because it looks so very much like one which Chatterton, if he had any conscience, or compunction, or even any fear of being detected, and having what were supposed to be his own words thrown in his teeth, must have made. There seems to be no reason why any other transcriber (especially one who seems rather to have wished to lengthen, than to abridge, the essay) should have omitted the passage. The original writer in the Common Sense in 1742 after having through the four paragraphs preceding that one which is (as I have observed) now omitted, enumerated and enlarged on many virtues of the animal—as that he did not give himself airs on his

elevation,—did not engross power and great employments,—did not make himself a dictator in the senate,—was no flatterer, and took no pleasure in flattery, and therefore did not squander the public treasure in pensions—goes on to say, in the paragraph omitted in the Dodsley reprint;—

"He was remarkably free from the mean and scandalous vice of lying:—An habitual lyar is undoubtedly the most scoundrel character in the creation—Lying is the child of ignorance and cowardice:—Little rogues practice it, to hide their little villanies.—There is not an instance of one man of great abilities that ever was a lyar.—When it becomes habitual in a person in a great station he is the pest of human society."

§ 8. *Poverty and Destitution.*

I have thought it right to state this matter fully as I apprehend that it throws great light on Chatterton's character, practices, and position. I must add my suspicion that some other things which have been placed among his works, have no more right to be there, than the Essay on Caligula's horse.

The story about that performance has, however, carried us into so long a digression that I must remind the reader of the reason for which it was introduced. I was expressing my full agreement with those who have spoken of the precarious nature of the business in which Chatterton had seen fit to engage, and I digressed to exhibit the

danger in which he stood of such exposure as must have put a stop to it. This I believe to have been the fact; but as to the argument, it seems sufficient to answer that it is impossible to believe that any such exposure could have taken place when he wrote to his mother[9] on the 20th of July, and we must suppose that he was, at least up to that time, pocketing the fruits of his imposture. If there was any redeeming quality in character of the unhappy lad, it was affection to his mother and sister. No doubt in his letters he put things in the best light, often boasted, and often lied; but I do not believe that when he wrote that brief and simple letter about the oratorio and silk gown, his promised visit to Bristol, his popularity and quantity of business, that his pecuniary resources were such as that in little more than a month he should destroy himself from mere want of the necessaries of life.

What is the alleged evidence of want? It seems to have been taken for granted on very insufficient testimony. "Of Mrs. Angel with whom he last resided," says Dr. Gregory, "no enquiries have afforded any satisfactory intelligence; but there can be little doubt that his death was preceded by *extreme indigence*[1]." I think we have seen reason for great doubt. Mr. Warton says "I am informed from Mr. Cross, late an apothecary in

[9] Works iii. 446. I should have said "sister."

[1] Life p. 97.

Brook Street, Holborn, where Chatterton lived and died for want of bread, that hardly a morning or evening passed but he would step into his shop to chat. Mr. Cross says, that his conversation, a little infidelity excepted, was most captivating: and that by the most pressing and repeated importunities he could never be persuaded to accept of frequent invitations to dine or sup. One evening, however, human frailty so far prevailed over his dignity as to tempt him to partake of the regale of a barrel of oysters, when Mr. Cross observed him to eat *most voraciously*." Warton I presume thought that there was great force in the words which he marked by *italics;* but really, to my own mind, one voracious meal of oysters is more than counterbalanced by the steady refusal of dinners and suppers offered with pressing and repeated importunities. "Mrs. Wolfe, a barber's wife," says Dr. Gregory, within a few doors of the house where Mrs. Angel lived, has also afforded ample testimony both to his poverty and to his pride. She says, "that Mrs. Angel" (from whom it may be recollected direct enquiries produced no satisfactory intelligence) "told her, after his death, that on the 24th of August, as she knew he had not eaten any thing for two or three days, she begged he would take some dinner with her; but he was offended at her expressions, which seemed to hint he was in want, and assured her that he was not hungry[2]." After quoting this passage from Sir Herbert Croft's Love and Madness,

[2] Life p. 98.

Dr. Gregory goes on "In these *desperate* circumstances" &c.

If writers are to build up "desperate" circumstances on such slight evidence as this, there is no dealing with them. His landlady's knowing that he had not eaten any thing for two or three days —if she did know it, for on the enquiry (which was some years afterwards) she does not seem to remember any such thing, and it rests on the testimony of the barber's wife—mplies that he had kept his room all that time, for if he went out for five minutes there was no answering for him. Mrs. Angel (the sack, or sash-maker, as she is variously described) may have had many lodgers; but probably never any but this, who "lived chiefly on a morsel of bread, or a tart, with a draught of water." If he was in his room all that time, it looks quite as much like illness or industry, as want. Perhaps he *was* not hungry—surely it is likely enough, if from any cause he had really abstained from all food for two or three days. One only wonders that he had strength to say so. Perhaps he *was* "offended at her expressions which seemed to hint that he was in want" because he knew that he was not in want. To me it seems probable that he had at that time a greater command of money than he had ever had before; and this "ample testimony" amounts to just nothing[3].

[3] Since this was written a report of the Inquest "held at the Three Crows Brook Street Holborn on *Friday* Aug. 27. 1770" [I believe it should be *Monday*] has been published in

Of one other circumstance which is supposed to have indicated "approaching indigence," Dr. Gregory says, "however he might be desirous of preserving appearances to the world, he was sufficiently lowered in his own expectations; and great indeed must have been his humiliation, when we find his towering ambition reduced to the miserable hope of securing the very ineligible appointment of a surgeon's mate to Africa[4]." Of this I hope to speak presently.

Notes and Queries No. 171. for Feb. 5. 1853. vol. vii. p. 138. which strongly confirms what I have here suggested. Neither Mrs. Angel nor Mrs. Wolf say any thing of his not having eaten for 2 or 3 days. The only thing that looks that way is that Mrs. Angel says that, "two days before his death he came home" (which by the way shews that he had been abroad) in a great passion "with the baker's wife who had refused to let him have another loaf until he paid her 3*s*. 6*d*. which he owed her previously;" and she also says that "he was always very exact in his payments to her" (Mrs. Angel) "and at one time when she knew that he had paid her all the money he had in the world, she offered him sixpence back, which he refused to take: saying 'I have that here (pointing to his forehead) which will get me more.'" How she knew that it was all the money that he had she does not say; but she further testifies that on the day before his death he was out from about 10 o'clock in the morning till 7 in the evening. Mr. Cross the apothecary deposes that during that time he called "on him and bought some arsenic, which he said was for an experiment." The money or credit which procured poison might have purchased food; and though Mr. Cross says "he knew" [he does not say how] "he was half starving" yet we have surely seen too much of his character to believe that he was in the state of utter destitution which has been supposed.

[4] Life p. 95.

§ 9. *Deficiency of Evidence.*

In the meantime let me say a word or two of the evidence which we want, and might reasonably expect.

We must remember that at the time of Chatterton's death the poems, and the very name, of Rowley were known to only a few individuals. One little Ballad, under the title of "Elinoure and Juga. Written three hundred years ago by T. Rowley a secular priest," and subscribed "D. B. Bristol, May, 1769," had been printed in a Magazine nearly a year before Chatterton came to London. It does not appear to have attracted notice; but probably the editor thought, or was told by some of his readers, that such antiquated matter did not suit his pages, and Rowley was no more heard of. Indeed it is one of the most singular parts of this mysterious business, that after Chatterton's arrival in London, he does not appear to have done any thing in the matter of Rowley. His favourite saying, that if "Rowley had been a Londoner instead of being a Bristowyan he could have lived by copying his works," is indeed repeated in his third letter to his mother from London, of May 14, but I do not know that there is any where, the slightest hint that he had offered originals or copies for sale, or publication[5], or mentioned the existence

[5] See L. and M. 207.

of these poems to any body in London. It does not even appear whether he took them with him, though it can hardly be doubted that he did[6]. The only exception (if indeed it is to be considered one) is, that on the 4th July 1770, about ten weeks after his arrival in London, he sent the "Balade of Charitie," to the Editor of the Town and Country Magazine[7]. It was in this periodical that Elinoure and Juga had appeared fourteen months before; but he makes no allusion to it, and does not say of this "balade," as he did of the Pastoral, that it was "written three hundred years ago by T. Rowley secular priest." It was not inserted[8].

One curious fact brought to our knowledge by the account of the inquest lately published in Notes and Queries, is that on the day before his death he "got up about ten o'clock, and went out with *a bundle of paper* under his arm which he said 'was a treasure to any one, but there were so many fools in the world that he would put *them* in a place of

[6] One of the most uncomfortable things in this enquiry is that one knows not how far to believe the plainest and most positive assertions of those who do not mean to deceive. One cannot tell whether they are speaking on private information, or merely taking things for granted and speaking by guess. Warton says "he went to London, carrying with him these transcripts and many originals" this would settle the point; but then Warton has just been telling us that Chatterton himself had accounted for the possession of a MS. by saying that he received it from his father, when Chatterton must have known that his father died before he was born.

[7] Tyrwh. Introd. xvii. [8] L. and M. 206.

safety, lest *they* should meet with accident'[9]." These are the words of his landlady's deposition. Whether he said "them" to her, and what he meant by the word, and what he did with 'them' during the nine hours of his absence on that day, is uncertain. Dr. Gregory says "whatever unfinished pieces he might have he cautiously destroyed them before his death; and his room when broken open, was found covered with little scraps of paper[1]." It is impossible to hinder people from throwing into a story picturesque incidents which are untrue or irrelevant. It appears by the papers recently published that Mrs. Angel the landlady, and her neighbour Mrs. Wolfe the barber's wife, became uneasy about Chatterton's non-appearance on the Friday morning; and being unable to force his door, which they found fastened, they "got a man who was near to break it open;" that is, according to Mrs. Wolfe, "a man who was going by." Mrs. Angel states that "the floor was covered all over with little bits of paper"—"the floor" says Mrs. Wolfe in almost the same words "was covered with little bits of paper;" but she adds that "the man who was with them picked up several and took away with him." This does not give one the idea of "little scraps," or "cautiously" destroying; especially as Mrs. Angel, in her deposition, repeated more than twenty consecutive words which the man had read out

[9] N. and Q. vii. 138.

[1] L. and M. 122.

from one of the "scraps." This probably even Croft could not have told Dr. Gregory; but what did he know except what he learned from Croft? and are not Croft's words, "His room when it was broke open, after his death was found, *like the room he quitted at Mr. Walmsley's*, covered with little scraps of paper[2]."—To be sure—that was one of the young man's methods of "poeting."—Before Croft paid his "visit of devotion" to Brook Street, he had enquired at Shoreditch, and Mr. Walmsley's nephew, who had been for six weeks Chatterton's bedfellow, told him among other things "that almost every morning the floor was covered with pieces of paper not so big as sixpences, into which he had torn what he had been writing before he came to bed"—and the rest of the family confirmed this by stating that, when he went away, "they found the floor of his room covered with little pieces of paper, the remains of his *poetings*, as they term it[3]."

It is worth while to observe these matters which may appear to some minute and trifling, because they seem to assure us that we should have heard if there had been any reliques of vellum or parchment. We may almost feel certain that there were none; and that he did not in that, or in any other way, destroy the documents which, truly or falsely, he ascribed to Rowley. "At Mr. Walmsley's he

[2] L. and M. p. 197. [3] Ib. 193.

used frequently to say he had many writings by him which would produce a great deal of money if they were printed. To this it was once or twice observed that they lay in a small compass, for that he had not much luggage. But he said he had them nevertheless[4]." And so, of course, he might have; and they might not be of such bulk as to hinder his carrying them off under his arm. The question is *whither* he carried them. I have seen it suggested that he perhaps left some MSS. in the care of his mother or sister, and brought only a portion to town, and that finding what he brought to London unmarketable he returned them to the same custody—that when his mother and sister heard of his catastrophe they made away with them, as things useless in themselves, and to them only painful memorials of their loss—or, what seems yet more probable, if they escaped that fate, that when, after several years, an enquiry was raised about all the facts respecting their relative, especially as to how he had come by the MSS., and what he had done with them—the mother and sister might then think it best not to have them found in their possession. This suspicion receives colour from two things.

First that they were simple uneducated women who seem to have been frightened at the language which some people held about the young man's

[4] L. and M. p. 208.

having committed "forgery." Croft says "A gentleman who saw these two women last year, declares he will not be sure they might not easily have been made to believe that injured justice demanded their lives at Tyburn, for being the mother and sister of him who was suspected to have *forged* the poems of Rowley. Such terror had the humanity of certain curious enquirers impressed upon their minds, by worrying them to declare the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth about the *forgery*[5]."

Secondly, though the mother and sister might be simple and uneducated, yet they were not fools. Whether they knew any thing worth telling may be a question; but certainly if there was any secret, either they kept it from Mr. Croft, or he kept it for them, very perfectly. He went to Bristol for the purpose of making enquiries on the 23 July 1778. Beside gaining what information he could from Mrs. Newton respecting her brother in conversation, he appears to have "desired her to recollect every circumstance concerning him, however trifling it might seem to her," and to let him have the account in writing. This seems to have produced a letter from her dated Sepr. the 22d in the same year. It is long, and as to many points minute, and she begins the last paragraph of it by saying "Thus, Sir, have I given you, as before the

[5] L. and M. p. 139.

great Searcher of hearts, the whole truth as far as my memory have been faithful the particulars of my dear brother. The task have been painfull, and for want of earlyer recollection much have been nay the greatest part have been lost[6]." It may be said that Mrs. Newton probably understood Mr. Croft to be chiefly desirous to obtain from her such an account of her brother's early life as none but her mother and herself could give; and that it was natural for her to dwell chiefly on what occurred before her brother left Bristol. This is true; but is it not strange that neither from this letter, nor so far as appears from any other source, did Mr. Croft learn whether the mother and sister had any idea that the young man was in circumstances of difficulty, or how, or when or from whom, or what, they had learned of the circumstances of his death? The subject must have been a painful one; but eight years had passed; a period long enough to blunt the poignancy of grief, though not to account for want of recollection.

Neither can we suppose Mrs. Newton to have been ignorant that she was writing to the landlord of Mr. Walmsley the plaisterer in Shoreditch where her brother had lodged, and her aunt Ballance was still lodging, and therefore to one from whom the story could not be kept secret; and, in fact, she seems to have felt no reluctance to hand over to

[6] L. and M. p. 146.

him (with permission to publish all, and to keep the latest as a curiosity) the letters which her brother had written to herself and her mother, from London. Yet in her own long letter there is no allusion to any thing that he said or did there—nay, the simple fact that he ever went to London at all, could never be guessed at, except from her incidentally saying that she packed up some books "to send to him when in London[7]."

But though he was perhaps the most ardent enquirer, and accompanied his questions with a gift of ten pounds, yet Mr. Croft was not the only person who went to the mother and sister to gather what might be remembered of the unfortunate young man. Mr. Bryant went to Bristol and conversed with them; and I believe with Mr. Barrett, Mr. Catcott and perhaps others. But neither from Mr. Bryant, nor from any other enquirer do we learn that the mother or sister gave any particulars of the young man's proceedings in London, of sympathy with his difficulties, or of their ignorance of his wants, and the surprise and shock occasioned by the unlooked-for termination of them.

Nothing of the kind is learned at Bristol—nothing by Mr. Croft from his tenant Walmsley at Shoreditch, or the young man's aunt who was still a lodger there. Perhaps they told him that they knew Chatterton to be in want, and had

[7] L. and M. p. 145.

helped him to the best of their power; or perhaps, that his pride so effectually concealed his poverty that they were thunderstruck when they heard that starvation had driven him to suicide—or, perhaps, that when he went away (they knew not why) they took it rather amiss, and did not feel it their place to look after so independent a youth, and one who, so far from depending on them, was going to patronize them, and make their fortunes, and who seemed quite able to take care of his own. Perhaps, only that when he went to live so far off they could not go [to] look for him, or he for them, and they lost sight of one another—Some one of the inmates at Shoreditch might have been expected to say something like some part or other of this; but if they did, Croft, whose professed object was to get, and to give information, has not told us. His dry account is "They say he gave no reason for quitting their house." It does not appear that he even told them where he was going, or that he afterwards informed them where they might find him.

Think of his first letter to his mother written on the day of his arrival, or the next, "seen all aunts, cousins—all well—and I am welcome."—Did he ever become otherwise? did he shun them, or did they repulse him? had they no reason to assign for ignorance or negligence of his fate?

I repeat that if the leading facts which have been assumed, are correct, we might expect,—we must have had—evidence which we have not.

It is remarkable, and a matter for regret, that Mr. Croft was unable to find Mrs. Angel who had been Chatterton's landlady in Brook street. "Mrs. Angel," he says, "to whose house he removed from Shoreditch, I have in vain endeavoured repeatedly to find out[8]." He states, that he understood her to be "in distressed circumstances," and intimates that she did not chuse to be discovered and questioned. It is a great pity, for she might have told us when, and how, and with whom, she communicated on the occasion, what the young man left, and what became of it. We have seen that he had been taunted in his former lodgings with having but little luggage, but we may suppose that he had some. We have ample testimony that he did not spend his money in eating or drinking, or more immoral pursuits; and we are told by himself how he did spend it. He writes to his sister, somewhere about a month before going to Mrs. Angel's lodgings[9], "I employ my money now in fitting myself fashionably, and getting into good company;" and even in this he had the main chance in his eye, for he adds "this last article always brings me in interest[1]." This new outfit must have been still quite fresh when he came to Brook street. His landlady could have told whether it was extravagant, whether it was pledged, and what became of it[2]. In short I cannot help thinking that

[8] L. and M. 193. [9] May 30. [1] Gregory's Life p. 250.

[2] [Professor Masson disposes of the poor youth's health and

if Mrs. Angel had chosen she might have told a good deal; some things which she was not disposed to tell, and which would have prevented a great deal of rhodomontade which has been written about neglected genius and starvation. She seems to have been a kind woman; and he appears to have felt her kindness. She had many years before made her deposition at the Inquest, and she did not want to be further catechised.

There is one more circumstance alleged in proof of Chatterton's destitution of which it is right to say a few words. Dr. Gregory says, "However he might be desirous of preserving appearances to the world, he was sufficiently lowered in his own expectations; and great indeed must have been his humiliation when we find his towering ambition reduced to the miserable hope of securing the very ineligible appointment of a surgeon's mate to Africa. . . . His resolution was announced in a poem to Miss Bush . . . on the score of incapacity probably, Mr. Barrett refused him the necessary recommendation, and his last hope was blasted[3]." Now it certainly seems that at some time or other (for it is not dated) Chatterton addressed some

strength and wardrobe, in a most summary way. Even during the latter half of July, "he has his very shoes, if we could see the soles, worn through, so that the dust gets in as he walks, and if it rains his feet are wet!" They must, I think, have been bad shoes to begin with.]

[3] Greg. Life 95—97.

lines "To Miss B—sh of Bristol" in which, according to the then prevailing style of magazine love-making, he represented that, as all his "torments were repaid," by this "ungrateful, cruel lovely maid" with "frowns or languid sneers," he should "seek the dreary shore, where Gambia's rapid billows roar," &c. at the same time adding a proviso, "Yet Polly, could thy heart be kind" &c.[4] This miserable trash, which all Chattertonians bind themselves to accept as one of the latest productions of the author of Rowley's Poems, may certainly have been written by Chatterton after he had formed (or perhaps I should say expressed) an intention of leaving England. For such an intention he did express to Mr. Catcott in a letter dated "London August 12. 1770" and also giving his full address; as if he had not communicated with Mr. Catcott before, since he occupied the lodgings in Brook street; a circumstance which seems probable on every ground. The letter is long, and touches on a variety of subjects; but the object of it seems not apparent until the last paragraph begins, "I intend going abroad as a surgeon.—Mr. Barrett has it in his power to assist me greatly by giving me a physical character. I hope he will." Here is, to be sure, nothing about going to Africa; nothing about a surgeon's mate; nothing that particularly intimates humiliation or destitution. "Going

[4] Works i. 44.

abroad as a surgeon" was surely no such abject degradation. That Chatterton in his character of magazine-lover should propose Africa as the place of his exile from Polly Bush, was very natural; for he had a fancy for writing about that country, and had at three several times composed three African Eclogues.

"He intimates [says Mr. Bryant] in some verses to a person at Bristol, that he had views of going abroad, and as we may infer," (we may if we please, but I see not why) "in the service of the African Company. . . . This, I imagine put it into his head to attempt two African Eclogues[5]." No Mr. Bryant, this will not do; and the suggestion of it is unlike your general care about dates which so often control imaginations. You own that the second of these Eclogues is dated "June 12."—and the other "May 2, 1770." when he had been scarcely a week in London—and there is a third "Heccar and Gaira" dated Jan. 3. 1770" before he came, or as many believe, thought of coming, to London[6]. But

[5] Bry. 476.

[6] [I feel some suspicion that this notion of Africa might be traced farther back. At least, in the Supplement to the Universal Magazine for the year 1769, which came out I suppose at the end of that year, while the number for January 1770 was not published until the end of that month, there is a story entitled "The Rival Twin-Brothers," which begins, "In the midst of the vast deserts of Africa, is a country whose inhabitants are as ancient, as numerous, and as well policed as the Chinese. They are called Mezzoranians. There an adventure happened, which, by its singularity, seemed deserving to be transmitted to pos-

take the latest date—supposing that he did write about Africa on June the 12th, he wrote to his

terity." It seems to be a long absurd story, in very small print, and I do not know that if one could surmount all moral and physical impediments, and read it, there would be sufficient reason for assigning it to Chatterton; or indeed any reason, except that the scene is laid in Africa, and the narrative, if I may offer an *ex pede* judgment, not altogether unlike what he might write. It was something quite different which has just fallen in my way, that made me think of him. Professor Masson says "The *Town and Country Magazine* seems to have been the only metropolitan print to which Chatterton was a contributor during the year 1769." (p. 219.) I have no doubt that he has had better opportunities and means for forming an opinion than I have had, and that he has used them with diligence and acumen; but in this, I cannot help thinking, he may be mistaken. All I know of the Universal Magazine which I have quoted, is, that I have a single, dirty, mutilated volume containing the numbers for the latter half of the year 1769, and that not many days ago, I accidentally opened it in the poetical part of the number for November, Vol. XLV. p. 265, and found a poem which, beside that it is "Addressed to Miss P—— L—— of Bristol," and bears the signature "C." is not I think entirely without internal evidence of Chatterton's authorship. With a view to this I have marked some lines by italics.

The COMPLAINT. *Addressed to Miss* P—— L—— *of* Bristol.

Love, lawless tyrant of my breast,
When will my passions be at rest,
And in soft murmurs roll—
When will the dove-ey'd goddess, Peace,
Bid black despair, and torment cease,
And wake to joy my soul—

Adieu! ye flow'r-bespangled hills;
Adieu! ye softly-purling rills,
That through the meadows play;
Adieu! the cool refreshing shade,
By hoary oaks, and woodbines made,
Where oft with joy I lay—

No more beneath your boughs I hear,
With pleasure unallay'd by fear,
The distant Severne roar—
Adieu the forests mossy side,
Deck'd out in Flora's richest pride:
Ye can delight no more—

Oft at the solitary hour,
When Melancholy's silent pow'r
Is gliding through the shade;
With raging madness by her side;
Whose hands, in blood and murder dy'd,
Display the reeking blade.—

mother on July 8th that he should "pop down" upon them at Christmas; and, in the letter already referred to, dated July 20 he tells his sister "You may be certain of seeing me before the 1st of January 1771[7]." Up to the 20th July then, we may feel certain that if he had any idea of going abroad, he did not wish other people to know it. It is not likely that he gave a confidence to Miss Bush which he denied to his mother and sister, and the plain probability seems to be that the verses to Miss Bush, of whom we hear very little beside, were written while the African Eclogues were in the

I catch the eccho of their feet,
And follow to their drear retreat,
Of deadliest nightshade wove:
There stretch'd upon the dewy ground,
Whilst noxious vapours rise around,
I sigh my tale of love—

Oft has the solemn bird of night,
When rising to his gloomy flight,
Unseen against me fled;
Whilst snakes in curling orbs uproll'd,
Bedrop'd with azure, flame, and gold,
Hurl'd poison at my head—

O say! thou best of womankind,
Thou miracle, in whom we find,
Wit, charms, and sense unite,
Can plagues like these be always borne?
No; *if, I still must meet your scorn.*
I'll seek the realms of night— C.

"He was always says Mr. Smith extremely fond of walking in the fields, particularly in Redcliffe Meadows . . . . . there was one spot in particular, full in view of the church, in which he seemed to take a peculiar delight. He would frequently lay himself down, fix his eyes upon the church and seem as if he were in a kind of trance" Gregory's Life p. 45, 46. The sixth stanza seems quite to agree with his notions of the terrific; and the snakes "bedrop'd with azure, flame, and gold," somewhat savour of the De Bergham Heraldry. I give these verses because if they are Chatterton's, it is likely that the other volumes of this magazine may contain productions of his pen which though not worth looking after for their own sake, may be of value from their throwing light on his history.

[7] Works iii. 446.

poet's head. I do not observe that she is mentioned any where but in his letter of July 11, where he says he had "pieces last month" in certain magazines and one is "To Miss Bush." The verses there (to say nothing of the time when they were composed) must have been printed and published by the 1st of July; and we are asked to believe that before he wrote the letters of June 29, and of July 8, the 11th, 20th, "his resolution was announced in a poem to Miss Bush" a person of whom we know nothing else—in other words having been reduced to despair, and resolved to fly, if possible, to Africa, he announced his intention to his mother and sister by printing doggrel verses to Miss Bush, which he took pains that they should see, while to those two relatives who were most concerned, and who had the best right to his confidence, he was writing with wanton and incredible cruelty, of his fair prospects and his purpose to visit them.

The object, and I think the effect, of these remarks is, to get rid of Africa, and the degradation, and all idea of going abroad *before* that 20th of July, when he wrote to his sister respecting his intended visit &c. And all that then remains of that story comes to this—that, by the 12th of August, something had occurred which altered his views and purposes; and made him wish to quit the country—or at least made him wish that Mr. Catcott and Mr. Barrett, and probably his other

friends at Bristol should believe that he intended to do so.

Though I speak thus doubtingly, because it is impossible to place confidence in the statements of one so addicted to falsehood, yet I see no reason to doubt that, for some reason or other, Chatterton really did wish to leave the country; but then we see that he set about it in a rational and sensible way, not by printing doggrel to a young lady, but by trying whether he could induce Mr. Catcott to persuade Mr. Barrett to give him a professional certificate. It will be observed that for some time (more than three weeks, from July 20—Aug. 12) before this letter to Mr. Catcott, the mother and sister of Chatterton had not heard from him, and after that he never wrote to them, as they distinctly state,—or, so far as appears, to any one else.

What the event, if any such occurred may have been, it may be vain to conjecture. He closed that letter with the words "I have a deal of business now and must therefore bid you adieu. You will have a longer letter from me soon—and more to the purpose." Yet notwithstanding his punctuality even when he had a "deal of business" on his hands—so that as his landlord Mr. Angel remarked in his deposition, he "was always writing to his mother or sister of whom he appeared to be very fond[8]"—he did not write to them again. But this

[8] N. and Q. p. 139.

letter seems to indicate that he meditated some important step; and I cannot but think that it might probably be something in the way of libel, sedition, or treason, for which he was afterwards afraid of being called to account.

With reference to this idea it may be observed that in his second letter from London of May 6th he says "Mr. Wilkes knew me by my writings since I first corresponded with the booksellers here. I shall visit him next week . . . . by means of another bookseller I shall be introduced to Townshend and Sawbridge[9]." How much truth there was in this (written when he had been but 10 days in London) I do not pretend to say; but it is evident that he was affecting the political, quite as much as the poetical, character. "Before he quitted Bristol says Dr. Gregory he had entered deeply into politics and had embraced what was termed the Patriotic Party," and he goes on to specify some of the scurrilous libels which the young man had sent before him. "When his relation Mrs. Ballance," (his fellow lodger in Shoreditch) "recommended it to him to endeavour to get into some office, he stormed like a madman, and alarmed the good old lady in no inconsiderable degree, by telling her, 'he hoped, with the blessing of God, very soon to be sent prisoner to the Tower, which would make his fortune[1].'"

[9] Greg. p. 234.

[1] Greg. p. 85.

§ 10. *Rowley's Poems.*

Thus far I have been only printing what I had written at various times, and with somewhat different purpose; but now use as an introduction to one or two questions, which I will here briefly state. In the first place;—

What are the Poems which have now been before the world for so many years under the name of Rowley?—that is what are they intrinsically? are they good or bad? do they display eminent genius and talent, or are they such as anybody might write?

I do not pretend to answer this question on my own judgment, or in any other way than by referring to the recorded opinions of others; and first, on every ground, I would place that of our great critic and moralist. Boswell tells us that,

"Johnson said of Chatterton 'This is the most extraordinary young man that has encountered my knowledge. It is wonderful how the whelp has written such things[2].'"

Sir John Hawkins, in reporting Johnson's opinion on the subject, says

"Of the merits of the poems admitted on both sides of the controversy, he said, 'It is a sword that cuts both ways. It is as wonderful that a boy of sixteen years old should have stored his mind with such a strain of ideas and images, as to suppose that such ease of versification and elegance of language were produced by Rowley in the time of Edward the Fourth[3].'"

---

[2] Chap. VI. an. 1776 Vol. VI. p. 173. [3] Ibid.

Here, as usual, Johnson's strong common sense went directly to the point. The "whelp," transplanted from the charity school to the lawyer's desk, might readily pick up old words, and very quaint ones; but where did he get "the strain of ideas and images?" Of this however presently—let me in the meantime suggest that one edge of the sword, if it ever had any sharpness, is immediately turned by the consideration that nobody ever supposed Rowley to have written the poems verbatim as Chatterton delivered what he called "copies." Nobody, as far as I know, ever doubted that the transcriber took what liberties he pleased with the versification, and language; and nobody will deny that a person of very inferior ability might smooth, and polish, and modernize, in "copies" compositions written in ancient times and language, while utterly incapable of composing, or even fully understanding and appreciating the originals. My object, however, at present is merely to state Johnson's opinion of the *real merits* of the poems; but I am induced to notice this point because it has been seriously urged as an argument against the antiquity of the poems, that the printed copies which we have, contain the word "its," which had not been invented in Rowley's time.

As I have said, however, my object is to take up, and present to the reader, the opinions of those who profess to have read, and formed a judgment

of, the Poems. Those opinions are to be found in two forms — sometimes in direct praise of the poems themselves; and assertions of their intrinsic excellence; and sometimes indirectly in eulogies bestowed on Chatterton as the supposed author of them; for nobody, I presume, will contend that all which has been said of Chatterton as a "marvellous boy" would have been said on the ground of his acknowledged writings.

But let us go on with the opinion of one who has a right, or at least an official claim, to be heard on such a question. What says WARTON?

"These poems exhibit, both in the connexion of words and sentences, a facility of combination, a quickness of transition, a rapidity of apostrophe, a frequent variation of form and phrase, and a firmness of contexture, which must have been the result of a long establishment of the arts and habits of writing. The versification is equally vigorous and harmonious, and is formed on a general elegance and stability of expression. It is remarkable, that whole stanzas sparkle with that brilliancy, which did not appear in our poetry till towards the middle of the present century. The lines have all the tricks and trappings, all the sophistications of poetical style, belonging to those models which were popular when Chatterton began to write verses[4]."

Again—if Johnson was struck with the Rowleian "strain of ideas and images" what does Warton say of them?

"The appearance of these images is not only transient and incidental, as arising out of the course or tenour of a narrative or a speech. Our author's propensity to personification is

[4] Enquiry p. 9.

sometimes indulged to a far greater extent. And here it is no less exceptionable. Not to advert at present to the decorations of expression, his HOPE, FREEDOM, and BATTAYLE, are delineated on too large a scale for the simplicity of a remote period. The terrible groupe of Miseries and Misfortunes which Sackville in the MIRROUR of MAGISTRATES has stationed at the portal of hell, and the imbodied passions, virtues, and vices, of Spenser's FAIRY QUEEN, a poem professedly allegorical, have not that amplitude of proportion, distinctness of figure, selection of picturesque attributes, discrimination, activity, and life, which constitute the personal creations of Rowley[5]."

Presently, and with reference to the same poem, Warton quotes the statement of Dr. MILLES Dean of Exeter—that is, in other words, on a question which had, perhaps, an equal claim to the attention of both, the Oxford Professor of Poetry, quotes the President of the Society of Antiquaries;—

"On this very suspicious ode, unhappily one of the most shining passages in all the poems, doctor Milles thus expatiates 'This Ode, or Chorus, is undoubtedly one of the most sublime compositions of Rowley's pen.——It scarcely contains a redundant word, or fails in a deficient expression; nor can its powerful imagery be conveyed in more concise or emphatical language. Freedom never appeared in a more original dress, than in her summons to war, in her wild attire, her undaunted spirit, her enduring fortitude: and the effectual manner in which she avenges herself of her enemy, the idea of Power is conveyed in the most lofty images[6].'"

These critics fully agree with Johnson as to the "images;" and differ between themselves only about the authorship — and what says HORACE WALPOLE, who was, certainly, under no temptation to flatter?

[5] Ib. p. 14. [6] Ib. p. 16, citing Milles Rowley, p. 298.

"The warmest devotees to Chatterton cannot be more persuaded than I am of the marvellous vigour of his genius at so very premature an age[7]."

"Nobody can admire the poetry of the poems in question more than I do—but except being better than most modern verses, in what do they differ in the construction[8]?"

Mr. MALONE, referring to this work, says

"Poetical readers .... will be clearly of opinion with Mr. Walpole .... that this wonderful youth has indeed copied ancient language, but ancient style he has never been able to imitate:' not for want of genius, for he was perhaps the second poetical genius that England has produced, but because he attempted something too arduous for human abilities to perform[9]."

Farther on he says

"Although I have as high an opinion of his abilities as perhaps any person whatsoever, and do indeed believe him to have been the greatest genius that England has produced since the days of Shakespeare, I am not ready to acknowledge that he was endued with any miraculous powers[1]."

What says "the celebrated Mr. MASON, author of Elfrida and Caractacus," in the parody which he made with reference to the imposture of Ireland?—

"Four forgers, born in one prolific age
Much critical acumen did engage.
The first was soon by doughty Douglas scar'd
Tho' Johnson would have screened him had he dared
The next had all the cunning of a scot
The third *invention, genius*—nay, *what not?*

---

[7] Gent. Mag. July p. 348.
[8] Ibid. May 1782. p. 249.
[9] Cursory Observ. p. 11.
[1] Ibid. p. 41.

Fraud, now exhausted, only could dispense
To her fourth son their threefold impudence[2]."

Dr. Gregory tells us that, "at the shrine of Chatterton some grateful incense has been offered[3]." For my own part, I suspect that most of it came from writers who knew very little of their hero. But it is right to give a few lines to this maudlin rhodomontade which has, no doubt, been the chief means of keeping up delusion. After mentioning Warton, Malone, and Croft, the biographer says "to these I shall add the testimony of Mr. Knox:" and then follows a passage of tedious bombast beginning

"Unfortunate boy! short and evil were thy days, but thy fame shall be immortal;" and going on about his "bitterest enemies," and the "insolence and envy of the little great, which cannot bear to acknowledge so transcendent and commanding a superiority in the humble child of want and obscurity[4]."

"The poetic eulogiums have, however," Dr. Gregory tells us, "exceeded both in number and excellence, the compliments of critical writers" and he proceeds to select "a few remarkably interesting and beautiful." The first is an extract from a poem by Mr. PYE who is characterized as "a Poet, whose superior elegance and classical taste do not appear to have met with all the applause they have deserved"—then "a beautiful monody written by Mrs. COWLEY" beginning,

[2] Gent. Mag. Jan. 1797. p. 64. [3] Life p. 113.
[4] Ibid. 120 quoting Knox's Essays No. 144.

"O Chatterton! for thee the pensive song I raise,
Thou object of my wonder, pity, envy, praise.
Bright Star of Genius!—torn from life and fame
My tears, my verse, shall consecrate thy name!"

Next there is a copy of verses by SCOTT of Amwell in which he celebrates the "wonderous tuneful youth;"

"whose boasted ancient store
Rose recent from his own exhaustless mine"

and asks the negligent persons "who superfluous wealth command"

"What thanks had you your native land
For a new SHAKESPEARE or new MILTON paid?"

HAYLEY is next produced, addressing the shade of Chatterton

"Oh, ill-starr'd youth, whom nature formed in vain,
With powers on Pindus's splendid height to reign[5]."

A long Monody by Mrs. ROBINSON comes next; and it is followed by a sonnet "from the polished and pathetic pen of Miss HELEN MARIA WILLIAMS," in which she had alluded to "him the Muses lov'd."

From "these elegant offerings to the genius of Chatterton," (as Dr. Gregory calls them) I have only extracted a few words indicative of their tone, and of the opinion which the writers thought fit publicly to express; and I have considered it right to take this notice of them, not only (not, indeed, so much) because Dr. Gregory collected and pub-

[5] Essay on Epic Poetry Ep. iv.

lished them, as because SOUTHEY did not refuse to reprint them in his edition of the works in 1803, and even to add COLERIDGE'S Monody, in which the author says;—

"Sublime of thought, and confident of fame,
From vales where Avon winds the Minstrel came;"

and thus he addresses him;—

"Sweet tree of Hope! thou loveliest child of Spring,
Most fair didst thou disclose thine early bloom,
Loading the west-winds with its soft perfume!
And Fancy, elfin form of gorgeous wing,
On every blossom hung her fostering dews,
That, changeful, wanton'd to the orient day!"

His own opinion is expressed in the preface, where he says, "That the Rowley-poems are thus printed as the works of Chatterton, will not surprise the public, though it may perhaps renew a controversy in which much talent has been misemployed. The merit of these poems has been long acknowledged." He afterwards characterizes Chatterton as "the most extraordinary young man that ever appeared in this country[6]."

Now if it be said that some of these testimonials are of little value, and others of none at all, I quite agree; but let it be acknowledged that some of the opinions which I have adduced came from men who had at least as good a right to speak on the intrinsic merits of the poems—for that is all our present question—as any of their contemporaries. They

[6] Works Preface to Vol. I.

did speak, strongly and plainly; and, I believe, without contradiction. So far as I can find, there has always been but one opinion—namely that Rowley or Chatterton, or somebody else, whoever he might be, had written Poems of extraordinary, and most uncommon merit.

These testimonials, therefore, are not to be set aside—the men who gave them are not to be stultified—as soon as it is found difficult to believe that poems which without any help from party or private interest have called forth such testimonials have been written by an illiterate youth, who never reached the age of eighteen. Warton must have been keenly sensible of the absurdity of his position, before he made his desperate plunge into nonsense.

"It is asked," he says, "with some degree of plausibility, how could Chatterton, who was educated in a Charity School, where only writing and arithmetic were taught, produce such fine pieces of poetry, which shew marks of more liberal pursuits, and studies of another nature? In the same general way of putting a question, it may be asked, how could that idle and illiterate fellow Shakespeare, who was driven out of Warwickshire for deer-stealing, write the tragedy of Othello? I give as a general answer, that the powers of unconquerable mind outgo plans of education and conditions of life. The enthusiasm of intellectual energy surmounts every impediment to a career that is pressing forward to futurity[7]."

Surely Warton could not be quite insensible to the disgrace of getting out of the difficulty by such

[7] Enq. p. 103.

absurdity; but in truth the position of those who believe Chatterton to have been the author of Rowley's poems is a very awkward one; such that I believe many of them would abandon it, if they knew it to be what it really is—that is, if they knew how much profaneness, obscenity, and nonsense, they are taking under their patronage. It is quite necessary for the understanding of the case to say something of Chatterton's acknowledged compositions.

§ 11. *Chatterton's acknowledged Writings.*

The truth is—not only as I have already quoted, that "Chatterton is one of those personages whom the general world knows more by allusion than by acquaintance" and that "every one can talk of 'the marvellous boy;' but few read Rowley's poems, or know much more about their author than that he ran away from Bristol, and met with a premature death in London"—not only, I say, is this true, but it is also true that among those things of which they know nothing, are Chatterton's acknowledged (perhaps I should say professed) works; and, among the things of which they have no conception, is the immeasurable difference between the compositions of Rowley and of Chatterton. It is a difference which is not to be slurred over with candid admissions of considerable inferiority, or apologized for,

by false excuses that the author was brokenhearted from neglect, or borne down by want and persecution.

I have perhaps given sufficient specimens of Chatterton's Satire; I will now give some of another kind. I do this, not with any purpose of criticising them. There could be neither use, nor pleasure, in doing it. I wish merely to ask the reader to look at these compositions, and say whether he believes that the writer of them was at the same time writing the poems which have elicited the encomiums which I have quoted. If it had been published when I collected them, I might have added the testimony of Professor Masson who says "No one who has not read the antique poems of Chatterton can conceive what extraordinary things they are[8]." . . . . "These antique poems of Chatterton (and there are above twenty shorter ones in the same series) are, perhaps, as worthy of being read consecutively as some corresponding portions of the poetry of Byron, Shelley, or Keats. There are passages in them, at least, quite equal to any to be found in these poets; and it is only the uncouth and spurious appearance of antiquity which they wear when the absurd spelling in which they were first printed is retained, that prevents them from being known and quoted[9]."

Let us look then at some of the modern pieces

[8] p. 337. [9] p. 339.

which are said to be by the same hand, and of which the Professor says "There is *not one of them that is not clever;* and from the longer ones there might be selected instances of nervous and epigrammatic expression and of sudden strokes of fancy which would have done credit to any veteran writer of the time [1]."

On this I feel constrained to offer one remark. It may seem harsh—some may, at first sight, think it unfair—but I believe that if we will speak the truth and judge rightly of Chatterton's works and abilities, we must say that his conduct was notoriously such, that while he is obviously responsible for what is bad, he must lie under strong suspicion of having stolen what is good, or above his usual mark. I have, perhaps, given sufficient evidence of the way in which he helped himself to the productions of others [2]. In fact Chatterton himself

[1] p. 337.

[2] If not I may add the case of Horace Walpole, who says, "A gentleman of rank, being struck with the beauty of the poems, and believing their antique originality, purchased a copy of them, and shewed it to me. I expressed my doubts—'Now then,' said the person, 'I will convince you: here is a painter's bill that you cannot question. What think you now?' 'This' I replied 'I do believe genuine; and I will tell you why'—and taking down the first volume of my Anecdotes of Painting, I shewed him the identic bill printed some years before. 'This,' said I, 'I know is ancient: Vertue transcribed it twenty years ago from some old parchments in the church of St. Mary Redcliffe, at Bristol,—*That* was the origin of Chatterton's list of great painters—and probably of his other inventions." *Gent. Mag.* May 1782. Vol. LII. p. 249.

(if he did not steal the Art of Puffing which is printed among his works) recognizes this literary thieving as a common, and customary, thing. Speaking of "gain," he says,

> "For this each month new magazines are sold
> With Dullness fill'd, and *transcripts of the Old.*"

There is a little corroborative story which should be mentioned in this connexion, because if Chatterton had no hand in the fraud (and I see no proof that he had) it shews that the dirty, but popular, periodical on which he mainly relied for support, was liable to be imposed on in this grossly impudent way. Sir Herbert Croft, in his silly and discreditable book, romancing about the feelings with which Chatterton must have read various things in the Town and Country Magazine, says "In July, p. 370 we read of Otway, that," &c.[3] Upon which "An old Correspondent" of the Gentleman's Magazine[4] says "The very agreeable author of 'Love and Madness' in investigating the sources of Chatterton's astonishing productions observes, that in the Town and Country Magazine for 1769, p. 370 is a paper (which, he might have added, was stolen literally from Dr. Goldsmith's Bee), wherein we read of Otway" &c.[5]

It is strange to think of men like Johnson and

[3] L. & M. p. 223. [4] Gent. Mag. Oct. 1780. p. 461.

[5] I have not Goldsmith's works at hand, but I see that I have pencilled a reference to "Bee No. VIII. Goldsmith's Works Vol. IV. p. 286. Edit. Lond. 1812."

Goldsmith being thus robbed in broad daylight on the high road of literature; but our business is rather to look at the predicament of Southey. To be sure he considered it partly as a matter of business—"vous sçavez l'arrangement pour les ouvres de Chatterton, que j'ai fait chez Messrs. Longman et Rees;" and partly as "une acte que peut appeller charitable[6]"—that is to raise money for Mrs. Newton[7]; but at the same time he must have felt it a sore humiliation to be made dry nurse to

[6] Selections from his letters. Vol. I. p. 187.

[7] Though he might be, and I believe constantly was, ready to do an act of kindness, Southey does not seem to have had any particular regard for Mrs. Newton; but rather to have suspected her of the vices which characterized her brother. In a letter to John May Esq. dated Bristol Nov. 23, 1802, he says

"You ask about Chatterton. The delay has been more owing to the quantity of new matter discovered than to any other cause. I daily expect to see it advertised. It makes three large volumes, instead of two, at a guinea and a half: thus, you see, Mrs. Newton, for 350 copies, will receive what for her is a very large sum. I have taken no notice of Croft. You will be very much pleased with a view of the front of Redcliff Church . . . . . Mrs. Newton relates an odd dream—if, indeed, it be not a waking dream—akin in imagination and authenticity to Rowley's poems. She dreamt that her brother had a monument in Redcliff Church, the stones whereof were cementing with a hot substance, that perpetually grew hotter and hotter, till at last it flamed out;—that being about to dress her dinner, she had no fire,—she remembered these flames, and went to them, and warmed her food upon her brother's monument. 'Now,' says she, 'my dream is out.' Surely this is too well put together to be a dream." Vol. I. p. 205. I should like to know what Southey meant by that little parenthetical notice of Sir Herbert Croft.

such rubbish. I have really been tempted to doubt whether there was not something of contemptuous sarcasm (what else could there be?) in the italic *s* which stands in the following passages;—

> "His virtues, stoically great, disdain*s*
> Smooth Adulations entertaining strains."
>
> Vol. I. p. 177.

> "The sing-song Trifles of the Stage,
> The happy fav'rites of the age,
> Without a meaning crawl along
> And, for a Moral, give*s* a Song."
>
> Ibid. p. 194.

In the following verses, which I give entire as a specimen of the amatory poems which Chatterton furnished for the use of his friend Mr. Baker, the *italics* in the first stanza are in Southey's edition.

To Miss Hoyland, 1768, with a present.

> "Accept, fair nymph, this token of my love,
> Nor look disdainful on the prostrate swain;
> By ev'ry sacred oath; I'll constant prove,
> And act as worthy *for* to wear your chain.
>
> Not with more constant ardour shall the sun
> Chase the faint shadows of the night away;
> Nor shall he on his course more constant run,
> And cheer the universe with coming day,
>
> Than I in pleasing chains of conquest bound,
> Adore the charming author of my smart;—
> For ever will I thy sweet charms resound,
> And paint the fair possessor of my heart."
>
> Works Vol. I. p. 90.

The following is from another poem of the same date addressed to this lady;—

"Thou greatest beauty of the sex,
When will the little god perplex
The mansions of thy breast!
When wilt thou own a flame as pure,
As that seraphic souls endure,
And make thy Baker blest?"

Works Vol. I. p. 80.

Where the error was what may be termed the converse of this, it could not be so indicated to the reader. For instance

"Where ginger's aromatic, matted root,
Creep through the mead, and up the mountains shoot."

Ib. p. 12.

And in the last line but two of the Address,—

To Miss Clarke, 1768.

"To sing of Clarke my muse aspires,
A theme by charms made quite divine;
Ye tuneful virgins sound your lyres,
Apollo aid the feeble line;
If truth and virtue, wit, and charms,
May for a fix'd attention call:
The darts of love and wounding arms
The beauteous Clarke shall hold o'er all.
'Tis not the tincture of a skin,
The rosy lip, the charming eye,
No 'tis a greater power within,
That bids the passion never die:
These Clarke possesses, and much more,
All beauty in her glances sport,
She is the goddess all adore,
In country, city, and at court."

Ib. p. 92.

Of the amatory poems, these which have been given are perhaps sufficient specimens; but they are open to one objection. They bear the date of 1768 and may have been written at as early a period as some of Rowley's poems. Let me then add a song which bears a later date;—

FANNY OF THE HILL, 1770.

"If gentle Love's immortal fire
Could animate the quill,
Soon should the rapture-speaking Lyre
Sing Fanny of the Hill.

My panting heart incessant moves,
No interval 'tis still;
And all my ravished nature loves
Sweet Fanny of the Hill.

Her dying soft expressive eye,
Her elegance must kill,
Ye Gods! how many thousands die
For Fanny of the Hill.

A love-taught tongue angelic air
A sentiment, a skill
In all the graces of the fair,
Mark Fanny of the Hill.

Thou mighty Power, eternal Fate,
My happiness to fill,
O! bless a wretched Lover's state
With Fanny of the Hill."

Vol. I. 127.

I trust that the reader fully understands, that I do not quote these verses either to criticise them, or to blame the unhappy youth who made them; but simply that the reader may judge whether he

really was such a "marvellous boy" as he is represented to have been. "Compositions of this nature" to borrow the language of Mr. Bryant "require no extensive reading; nor do they contain any extraordinary marks of genius. We find poems in the same strain accomplished by persons of little learning; and often by young ladies; who not being engaged in the study of the dead languages, gain an earlier intimacy with their own. . . . . But, as I before said, for the framing of such compositions, there is no need of any extraordinary parts; nor for any depth of erudition. A person may write volumes in this style and taste, and never be a Rowley[8]." I must go farther, and express my belief that a person who was a Rowley, never could have written such stuff as the reader will find in Chatterton's works—stuff of which I will here add only one more specimen of a somewhat different kind from "Ethelgar. A Saxon Poem[9];"—

"Comely as the white rocks; bright as the star of the evening; tall as the oak upon the brow of the mountain; soft as the showers of dew, that fall upon the flowers of the field, Ethelgar arose, the glory of Exanceastre: noble were his ancestors, as the palace of the great Kenrick: his soul, with the lark, every morning ascended the skies; and sported in the clouds: when stealing down the steep mountain, wrapt in a shower of spangling dew, evening came creeping to the plain, closing the flowers of the day, shaking her pearly showers upon the rustling trees; then was his voice heard in the grove, as the

[8] Obs. p. 475.

[9] Works Vol. III. p. 6.

voice of the nightingale upon the hawthorn spray; he sung the works of the Lord; the hollow rocks joined in his devotions; the stars danced to his song; the rolling years, in various mantles drest, confest him man.—He saw Egwina of the vale; his soul was astonished, as the Britons who fled before the sword of Kenrick; she was tall as the towering elm; stately as a black cloud bursting into thunder; fair as the wrought bowels of the earth; gentle and sweet as the morning breeze; beauteous as the sun; blushing like the vines of the west; her soul as fair as the azure curtain of heaven. She saw Ethelgar; her soft soul melted as the flying snow before the sun. The shrine of St. Cuthbert united them."

But enough of this—I might strengthen the argument by what is worse; for there is worse in existence, of which I can only say that I wish others had not said so much. I had heard that things existed which the writers about Chatterton did not, either perhaps from a sense of decency, or from the fear of encountering such a sense in others, think fit to publish; but I have never seen any of them, or any copy, except the specimen which Professor Masson has published.

The case, however, wants no such help. Look at Chatterton's best writings—if critics will settle which they are, and specify what they admire—or if they decline making a selection, look at all the acknowledged compositions of Chatterton, and you will find irresistible evidence that he could not have made the poems of Rowley. He was much to be pitied—he was placed by circumstances in a false position—he thought he was to write poetry—he did his best, but it was very bad.

§ 12. *Guesses and Suggestions.*

But if Chatterton did not make Rowley's Poems, he must have found them, or found something really ancient. It is of secondary importance to enquire what amount of alterations he might make, designedly or through ignorance, in copying ancient documents. The primary question is "If he had documents what became of them?" and to this we can only reply by guesses about probabilities, and suggestions of possibilities.

That he had documents at Bristol, is not doubted. It does not appear to me equally certain, though very probable, that on coming to London he brought them, or some of them, with him; and that they were in the "bundle of papers" which, on the last day of his life, he carried out from his lodgings, under his arm, with the professed intention of depositing them in a place of safety. What did he do with them? What was his idea of a "place of safety?" All we know is derived from the depositions at the inquest. Mrs. Angell, Chatterton's landlady, say that he "got up *about ten* o'clock and went out with a bundle of paper under his arm, which he said 'was a treasure to any one, but there were so many fools in the world that he would put them in a place of safety, lest they should meet with accident.'" Mr. Cross the apothecary in Brook Street says "he called on me

on the 24th August about *half-past eleven* in the morning[1]." Putting these two statements together, and supposing them to be both accurately true, we should be led to the inference that the "place of safety" was one to which Chatterton might go, and return again in little more than an hour. This supposition gains some colour from the fact, that Mr. Cross says nothing of Chatterton's having a bundle of papers under his arm when he called on him. It would have been quite natural that such a circumstance should have formed a subject of remark, if not a topic of conversation, between these two neighbours, who were on such familiar terms that one generally called on the other two or three times in a day. It would not have been strange even if (though nothing had passed respecting it when they were together) Mr. Cross had noticed the fact at the time, and mentioned it at the inquest. On this supposition, as I have remarked, the place of safety must have been at no great distance. Chatterton may have been there, deposited the bundle, and returned to the shop of Mr. Cross in Brook street—not to his own lodgings, according to Mrs. Angell who says, "he returned *about seven* in the evening." So that on this hypothesis he returned to Brook street for no other purpose (so far as appears) than to purchase poison of his neighbour; and where he went, or what he did during the rest of the day does not appear.

[1] N. and Q. Vol. VII. p. 138.

At the same time, no one who has paid any attention to the subject of evidence referring to time, will construe very strictly, or lay great stress on, the testimony of even honest and intelligent witnesses. Mrs. Angell's "*about* ten o'clock" when Chatterton got up, and her statement that, as the next thing, not perhaps instantly, he "went out," might perhaps bring the time on to something very near Mr. Cross's "*about* half-past eleven;". and then we may suppose, as indeed appears most natural, that the young man called on Mr. Cross when he "went out" from his lodgings. In this case however we must suppose him to have had the bundle with him. Perhaps he had —perhaps it was the subject of discourse—perhaps Chatterton told Mr. Cross, what Mr. Cross did not feel bound, or disposed, to tell the Coroner—perhaps Mr. Cross's was the place of safety—but I rather incline to the opinion that Chatterton's idea was to place them in the hands of his mother and sister; and that in, or not far from, Holborn he found some public conveyance by which he sent the parcel to Bristol[2].

I see that Professor Masson says "He walks, as usual, with this bundle under his arm, down Brooke Street; disappears somewhere about Holborn, and after a little reappears in Brooke Street, and calls at Mr. Cross's shop;" and he presently

[2] See before p. 70.

adds with reference to his *buying* the poison of Mr. Cross "for, somehow, during that walk in which he has disposed of the bundle he has procured the necessary pence [3]." Of course the broad, positive, assertion that Chatterton procured money during the walk, is a mere gratuitous assumption required by the talk about destitution and starvation. It would be more to the purpose if those who maintain that hypothesis would explain why the money which bought poison, would not have paid for bread. But my reason for noticing it is, that it may perhaps be intended to suggest that Chatterton obtained money by selling the contents of the bundle. But if those contents were the MSS. what sort of person would have bought them without the purpose of doing something with them which would let the world know that he had got them?

There is one other point which ought to be noticed and borne in mind; for it opens a wider field for enquiry. Suppose that the MSS. which Chatterton used have perished, there is no proof, and there seems to me to be no probability, that those MSS. were the only copies of the Poems in existence. It was very principally to this point that I wished to direct the attention of those who might be so circumstanced as to be able to make enquiry; and without attempting to speculate, when

[3] p. 322.

I do not see my way, I will here only subjoin the letters which I wrote two years ago in the Morning Chronicle and to which I have already alluded.

I have already said that the first was called forth by a letter signed A. H. E. in the paper for the 1st of Nov. 1854.

To the EDITOR of the MORNING CHRONICLE.

Sir—Will you allow me to say a few words with reference to your article of October 28, and the letter of "A. H. E.," which appeared in your paper of the 1st instant. I will confess at once, for of course you would detect me, that I avail myself of your casual mention of Chatterton merely as a peg whereon to hang a suggestion which I have long wished to make to the reading public, and which may, perhaps, under present influences and impressions at Bristol, be more effective than I could expect it to be under common circumstances.

You will not suppose that I wish, or think it possible, to revive the Rowleian controversy; or that, if I meditated such an outrage on society, I should attempt to do it at your expense. My suggestion is merely this—if, as I and some other people most firmly believe, Chatterton did not make the poems which he called Rowley's, he must have had something to copy from; whatever that may have been, there is too much reason to believe that it has been destroyed; but other copies may exist; and at a time when archæology is so zealously at work in the manuscript department, they may be turned up. I am only afraid that the poems have become so far forgotten, that "Ælla," "Goddwyn," "the Battle of Hastings," &c., might not be recognised if they were found, mixed up, as they might probably be, with other more and less known poetry, in such miscellaneous volumes as are to be found in our manuscript collections. I have often desired to give a hint of this sort to those who are working among such matters; and of course it applies particularly to those of Bristol. I have never had any connexion with that city, and am in no way

concerned for its credit, or authorised to advise its inhabitants; but I cannot help expressing a hope that this new literary era may be marked by their repudiating the nonsense which has been written about Chatterton, and setting to work in earnest to find out the mystery of Rowley, so as to clear the history, not only of the poems, but of their city, from the impudent falsifications of an unprincipled impostor.

I am, sir, your obedient servant, F. A. S.

In a letter inserted on Nov. 11th and relating to some other points in dispute A. H. E. said

I will conclude with a few words respecting Chatterton, to whom "F. A. S." directs the attention of Bristolians. I believe it is capable of pretty clear demonstration that the poems he pretended to be Rowley's were purely his own invention*. Whether the term "unprincipled impostor" is applicable to Chatterton any more than to Macpherson, the inventor of "Ossian's Poems," or than to the fair authoress of "Lady Willoughby's Diary," *et id genus omne*, is a question which admits of longer discussion. Of Chatterton, Dr. Johnson (see "Boswell's Life") thus expressed himself:—"This is the most extraordinary young man that has encountered my knowledge. It is wonderful how the whelp has written such things." I am, sir, yours faithfully,

A. H. E.

* "F. A. S." may find the whole subject of Chatterton and Rowley's poems succinctly and conclusively summed up in a note to Elton's "Boyhood and other poems," published by Longman, page 129.

To this I answered

To the EDITOR of the MORNING CHRONICLE.

Sir—As I should be sorry to be misunderstood, will you allow me to say, in reply to "A. H. E." that I have long known Dr. Johnson's saying with reference to Chatterton; but I never imagined that it was to be considered as a voucher

for the fact that "the whelp" *did* write the poems. Indeed, this observation of our great moralist must be (as in my edition of Boswell it is) coupled with another, recorded by Sir John Hawkins, which I have always admired as a specimen of the manner in which Johnson's strong common sense went straight forward to the real point at issue. Speaking of the intrinsic merits of the poems, he said:—"It is a sword that cuts both ways. It is as wonderful that a boy of sixteen years old should have stored his mind with *such a strain* of ideas and images as to suppose that such ease of versification and elegance of language were produced by Rowley in the time of Edward IV." Three words, in this short sentence, contain the pith of an argument which I conceive to be unanswerable. At all events, it is not to be answered by frivolous demonstrations that the youth might have seen this or that old book, and picked up this or that obsolete word from it. Mr. Bryant—very fairly, I think—suggests that "we may as well suppose that a pedlar built York Cathedral by stealing a tile or a stone in every parish that he passed through." For my own part, I have been satisfied to say to myself, with great confidence (at the same time quite modestly, and never before company), "If Johnson had known what the 'whelp' *did* write, and what the 'whelp' *was*, as well as I do, he would have talked very differently."

The reference to Macpherson is plainly begging the question; for I believe that he *did* make Ossian, and that Chatterton *did not* make Rowley. But it is not worth while to speak of this, for I should not think of calling any man (still less a mere boy) an "unprincipled impostor" for having perpetrated a literary hoax, even of a more discreditable character than that which Chatterton's friends (at least his admirers) are so determined to fix upon him. I may still think it right to use such terms of anybody whom I believe to have used documents which he had either found or invented for purposes of fraud, and with a view to obtain money under false pretences. I believe that I might fully justify myself in this case, without referring to Rowley at all. In short, for I am afraid you will think me tedious, I have been led to take a different view from that which is popularly taken of Chatterton's character. Some people see an almost or

quite inspired "boy-bard," a new Shakespeare or Milton, and so on (if one can go on when the force of nature found it hard to get so far), where I see only a rather precocious lawyer's clerk, sharp and shrewd, but with no very peculiar talents, and nothing that should be called genius—they think that he made the poems, I believe that he found them—they think that he left his calling for an idle trade, lured by visions of poetic fame; I think he was wide awake to turn a penny, and scheming to make the most of his treasure-trove—they see lofty genius, disdainful, impatient of neglect, intolerant of withheld worship; I wish I could help seeing a spirit mean, selfish, false, and ungrateful—they believe that he was driven to destitution, despair, and self-destruction by the neglect of those (they say not whom) by whom it should have been hindered (they say not how), while I believe no such thing, and am inclined to think that, whatever might lead to that lamentable act, it was not the fear of starvation.

I may truly say that this letter is much longer than I intended; but still I must add what is in fact the chief reason for writing it. Allow me again to entreat archæologists, not only at Bristol, but also, and perhaps still more particularly, in the northern part of England, not to allow the notion of forgery to prevent their keeping a look-out for "Old Rowley," and just acquainting themselves with the printed portrait (disfigured though it be) which has come down to us, so that they may know him if they meet him.

I am, sir, your obedient servant, F. A. S.

GILBERT AND RIVINGTON, PRINTERS, ST. JOHN'S SQUARE, LONDON.

JUN 1 8 1973

UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG LIBRARY
3 1888 007 310 445

08-CHQ-850